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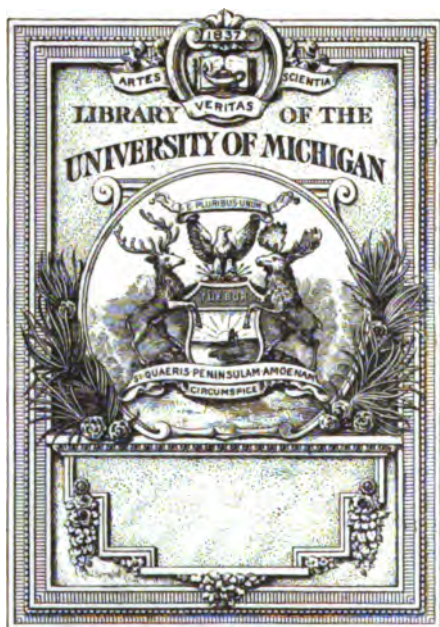
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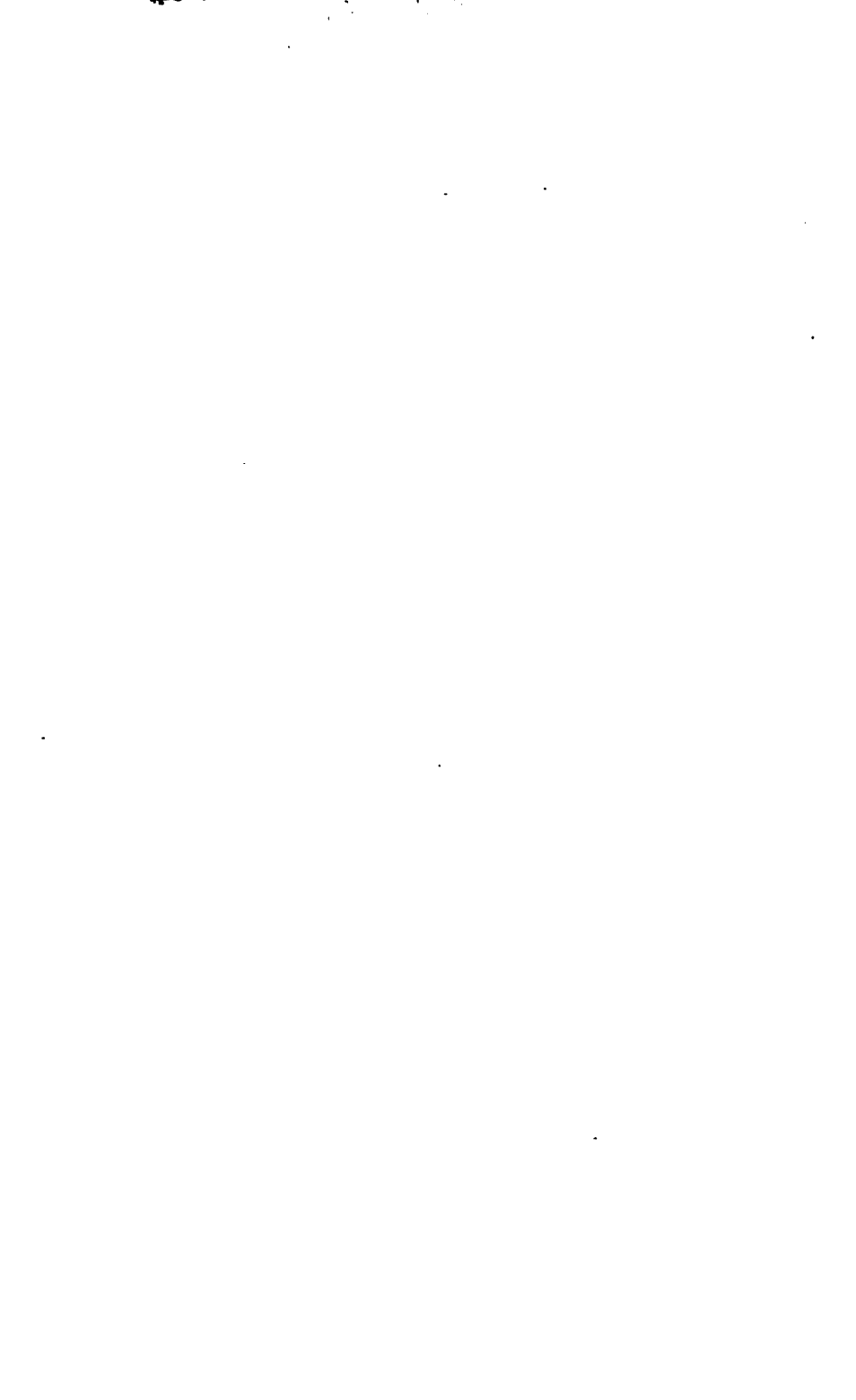
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LONDON SOCIETY.

JANUARY 1881.

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

MR. ROBERT M'COULLAGH.

JUST out of Basinghall-street, at the end of an unnamed court, there stands a house which must have been old even at the commencement of the present century. So far the march of improvement has passed it by. There remains probably some fag-end of a lease, or a difficulty regarding adjoining property; for otherwise there can be little doubt it would have been swept off the face of the earth long ago, and the 'valuable site' it now occupies covered with new offices, chambers, or warehouses. There are plenty of all to be let close at hand, as there are, indeed, in every street and alley in the heart of London; but the modern builder is as insatiable as the grave. He never sees an ancient edifice without longing to destroy it. Churches and churchyards, abbeys, palaces, castles, cottages, give him his own way, and he would swallow them all. He is the nineteenth-century Dragon of Wantley, and it may be that even at this present moment of writing he has looked upon the old house hard by Basinghall-street, and marked it for his own.

A very old house, and one which, though it has been used this many a day for business purposes, still, with its wide staircase, its heavy balusters, its hand-rail about a foot square, its fine hall and noble rooms, appeals mutely against the purposes to which it has been turned, and reminds the visitor of a time when guests trooped up the easy steps, and a dignified hospitality rendered it an honoured abode in the eyes of citizens living in the many localities once considered choice, before railways were invented and all the world went gadding.

In the year of grace 1854 it had, however, for more than a quarter of a century been occupied by a wholesale dealer in Scotch confectionery—marmalades, biscuits, and other edibles of a like tempting and toothsome description.

One half of the ground-floor and basement was devoted to the requirements of business; the rest of the house was used for a dwelling. There Mr. Robert McCullagh—'plain old Rab,' as he sometimes called himself—had made and saved a considerable amount of money; he had established for himself a reputation;

he had seen four sons grow to manhood, and started three of them out in the world; he had lost his wife; and he had lived with great contentment on a very small sum per annum.

To turn from Basinghall-street into the court, which led to the old house, was like plunging from light to darkness—a sudden chill seemed to freeze the marrow, even on a warm summer's day, when the main thoroughfare was left and the passage entered. Not a gleam of sunshine ever irradiated the first portion of the way; but after a short distance, the court, turning sharply to the left, suddenly widened and revealed an opening like a tiny square, where four old houses stood side by side, forgotten apparently by the external, busy, bustling world.

'As much to yourself as if you were on the top of Ben Nevis,' said Mr. McCullagh, in eulogy of his residence. 'There may be grander places in London, I do not dispute that; but more comfortable? no, not within or without the bills of mortality.'

If contentment can insure happiness, Mr. McCullagh might be accounted a happy man. He was contented with his house, his business, his native land, London, the city of his adoption, and last, but not least, himself. In the course of his whole life he might have made a mistake or two, he was not 'just sure;' but we are all liable to make mistakes, and he had fallen into fewer errors than his fellows. He did not desire a better trade, or a better house, or anything he had not got or could not get; it provoked him to hear people say they wanted this, that, and the other, instead of being satisfied with their lot, and plodding along quietly and constantly.

'The silent sow,' remarked Mr.

McCullagh, reverting to the ingenious simile of earlier days, 'sups the most brose; and when you hear a man grumbling for what Providence has not seen fit to give him, you can aye tell pretty nearly what the end of that man will be.'

It was towards this palace of content, this retired abode, so suited for a contemplative life, that one dreary November day a gentleman walked briskly, and with a certain eager brightness in his face which might have told any passer-by his thoughts were of the pleasantest.

And yet, nevertheless, there came every now and then over the brightness a certain anxious expression which obscured the joy, as a passing cloud sometimes dims the sunshine.

He had good news to tell; but not perfectly unalloyed. He could not exactly pre-determine how what he wanted to say might be received. Mr. McCullagh, having been the architect of his own fortune, was sometimes given to look disparagingly on the edifices erected, and in course of erection, by others.

The great hall-door stood hospitably open, and the gentleman walked straight into an office partitioned off and divided into a number of separate boxes for desks and clerks.

Going up to one of these, and putting his head over the railing, he asked an old man who was busily employed in book-keeping,

'Is my father in, Mr. Roy?'

Mr. Roy was at the moment engaged in ruling two red lines at the bottom of a money column, and did not take the slightest notice of either the question or the questioner till he had finished what he was about; then, wiping his pen on a piece of rag which

hung suspended by a bit of cord from the handle of one of the drawers, he answered slowly,

'Ay, Mr. Robert, you'll find him up above.'

'Is he at dinner?' inquired Mr. Robert.

'Well, he did speak of taking a bite,' was the cautious concession.

With an impatient gesture the younger man turned from the desk, and walked out of the silent office, throwing an irritable glance around as he went. Everything in it was Scotch, deeply, darkly, beautifully Scotch, from the cheek-bones of the errand-boy whom he encountered on the threshold of the counting-house, to Mr. Roy, who might, judging from his accent, have only arrived from the Land o' Cakes on the previous evening.

He went slowly up the wide easy steps of the oak staircase, the gloom of the November afternoon seeming to follow and deepen around him the higher he ascended, and came to a heavy door, likewise of oak, at which he knocked gently.

'Come in!' cried a sharp clear voice; and thus bidden, the young man entered.

As he opened the door, a girl who had been playing '*Di tanti palpitti*' with labouring earnestness upon a decrepit piano, several of the notes in which were dumb, rose from a music-stool as rickety as the instrument; and at the same moment a homely-looking person, who acted as housekeeper in Mr. McCullagh's establishment, exclaimed, in a tone of some surprise,

'Why, it's Robert!'

'So it is, I declare!' said Mr. McCullagh. 'You're just in time for a bit of dinner; it will be set on in a minute.'

'I have dined, thank you,'

answered the person called Robert, advancing towards the hearth, and trying to make head against the gloom, which the mere spark of fire burning in the grate seemed to deepen rather than decrease, 'an hour and more ago.'

'O, come, that won't do,' returned his father; 'luncheon, or a snack, not a dinner, you know.'

'All the dinner I ever have, at any rate,' said the young man, looking with eyes which could not conceal their discontent at the meagre appointments of Mr. McCullagh's table, on which a wench, with her sleeves tucked up, was placing a piece of roast beef that had been, as the housekeeper explained, 'hotted up,' some smoking potatoes, and a dish of greens.

'Will I light a candle?' asked the housekeeper; and having received a gracious assent from Mr. McCullagh, the simple preparations were complete.

'Draw your chair, Robert; you'll take a glass of ale, at any rate?' suggested his father.

'I'll take a glass of ale, thank you,' assented Robert, drawing his chair as invited, but employing himself somewhat irreverently the while a blessing was being requested, scrutinising the knives and forks he could remember from the time he was a child.

No new-fangled things, except in the way of trade and merchandise, were ever to be found in that house. The handles of the knives were green, and the blades worn down to half their original length; the forks, likewise green-handled, were steel-pronged; the plate German silver; the dishes commonest delf; the solitary candlestick brass; the table-linen coarse; the service of the roughest.

'Well, Effie, and how does the music get on?' asked the young

man, addressing the young girl, who sat opposite to him.

'Middlin,' she answered; she was Scotch too.

'Her teacher says she is getting on well,' said Mr. McCullagh, wrestling with the joint, which had got somewhat dried in the process of re-roasting. 'I am thinking, Janet,' he went on, addressing his housekeeper, 'Mary has let the meat burn a wee.'

'She has so,' agreed Miss Nicol, 'but it is not easy to prevent that. It might have been better to hash the beef, but I thought you were tired of hash.'

'Tired! me tired!' echoed Mr. McCullagh; 'what are you thinking about, Janet? I do not turn up my nose at good food. I can mind the time when I found it hard enough to get any.'

If this remark was intended as a reflection on his son—which is open to doubt, since the worthy merchant had a general as well as particular manner of delivering such utterances—it did not produce any apparent effect. The younger Robert had heard too many statements of the kind in former times to attach much weight to them now. He stared into the dim distance whilst the dialogue proceeded, looking as much an anachronism amongst his own relations—both Miss Nicol and Effie were some far-away connections of the McCullaghs—as Mr. McCullagh and his household belongings did amongst the decaying splendours of that ancient mansion.

The architect of his own fortunes was a small mean-looking man, with straight sandy hair, a shrewd shrewish nose, eyes so light as to be almost colourless, a face perfectly clean save for freckles, a wide mouth, a long upper lip, and a forehead moderately high. His son, on the con-

trary, had dark hair which curled a little naturally, dark eager eyes shaded by lashes so long as to give at times an almost womanish expression to his face; his upper lip was short, his mouth almost weak, his whiskers large; he looked about a head taller than his father, and was about half as broad again. He carried himself well, spoke well, had mixed in the world, and adopted its usages and modes of expression; yet the elder McCullagh had more sense in his little finger than the younger in his whole body, and the old man, so called, not because he was actually old, but merely to distinguish him from the juniors of his family, as heartily despised his first-born for his paucity of brains as his son despised him for his want of polish.

There ensued a short silence. Mr. McCullagh helped himself plentifully to vegetables ere pushing the dishes over to his female belongings, and devoted himself to his frugal dinner as though it had been an aldermanic feast. Miss Nicol and her niece ate the driest and most burnt portions of the meat, and made no attempts at conversation. Robert was a complete wet blanket in that house: just as effectually as the family damped his spirits did he depress theirs. Between himself and his father there yawned a gulf almost as long and as wide as the whole term of his natural existence; and though peace had for years prevailed so far as angry word or hot controversy, it seemed, to say the least of the matter, unlikely that the chasm would ever be bridged over now.

The silence was broken by Mr. McCullagh taking up the beer-jug and peering curiously at its contents; after that scrutiny he set it down again, and said,

'Maybe, Robert, you would take

a dash of whisky instead of the ale. This seems to be almost the last of the barrel.'

'Thank you,' answered his son. 'I should prefer the whisky.'

'I think myself ale is apt to lie cold on the stomach,' remarked Mr. McCullagh, pushing the despised beverage over to Miss Nicol, who accepted the beer as she had taken the chips of roast beef. 'Effie, get out the bottle like a good girl, will ye?' he added, presenting her with the key of the *garde-du-vin*, which he always kept safe and sound in his own pocket, trusting the custody of it, save for a minute, as on the present occasion, neither to man, woman, nor child.

'Take more, take more,' he cried, as his son poured a very small modicum into his tumbler, and prepared to fill up the glass with water. 'What's the good of spoiling prime liquor in that way?'

Nothing loth, perhaps, the younger man availed himself of this invitation; possibly he was not sorry to fortify his own spirits with Dutch courage. His father watched him, and said, 'That's right,' for there chanced to be one point on which Mr. McCullagh could be not merely liberal, but generous, and that was 'Usquebagh.'

He grudged a penny wherewith to buy matches, but he opened gallon jars of whisky in a manner as genial as remarkable.

And no better 'wheiskey,' as he called it, ever came south. How he got it, from whom, and whence, were secrets Mr. McCullagh trusted not to man born of woman. He knew the weakness inherent in man's nature from that origin, and was quite of opinion that 'three people might keep a matter quiet if two were away.'

'You are dining earlier to-day, are you not, father?' asked his son, who certainly had not intended to make a fourth at the social board.

'It's sooner than my usual,' answered Mr. McCullagh. 'I keep to five o'clock now, as I took to five o'clock when I first started in business on my own account, as the best hour at which a man engaged in trade can dine in London. The banks close at four; all the letters should be ready for posting; it's just the most suitable time in every way that can be found; but it so happens to-day I want to go to Holborn to see Kenneth.'

'Is he in town?' asked Mr. Robert McCullagh junior, without any special elation of voice or manner, though Kenneth was his brother.

'Ay, he's in town,' answered Mr. McCullagh, 'with his father-in-law that's to be.'

'What! is Kenneth going to be married?' said Robert, surprised.

'Have ye no heard of it?' exclaimed Miss Nicol, with a visible increase of animation. 'Why, we knew three days ago.'

'He hasn't written to me for three weeks,' was the reply.

'It wasn't settled then,' explained Mr. McCullagh, 'but it is now.'

'Who is she?' inquired his son, with a faint show of interest.

'The daughter of his master—no less,' said Mr. McCullagh, repressed glee visible in every feature. 'Kenneth, as you know, was aye canny, but, my faith, he has done well for himself now. She is not only, as I am given to understand, a well-favoured young woman, but she does not come to him with an empty hand. How much fortune do you suppose her father is going to settle on her

when they come together? Just give a guess, Robert,' the first portion of which Christian name, it may be remarked, the Scotch merchant pronounced as if it were an exclusively French production.

The junior Robert, affecting an interest in the matter he did not feel, said it was impossible for him to guess: would his father, he suggested, give some clue?

'What would you say to five hundred pounds?' asked Mr. McCullagh, 'putting himself forward,' as he expressed it, 'for a help of cheese,' and 'breaking a bittock' off the oat-cake, both of which luxuries Mary now placed upon the table, in addition to a pat of butter, printed, possibly by some one possessed of a fine sense of irony, with the image of a cow. 'What would you say to five hundred?' and Mr. McCullagh, relishing with an exceeding delight the exquisite humour of this question, winked across at Miss Nicol as he propounded it for the second time.

Robert junior saw the wink, and knew there was something behind; nevertheless he answered boldly,

'Why, I should say five hundred was a very good *dot* for a fellow in Kenneth's position.'

'And if I went up a figure or two higher—suppose to seven fifty?'

'That Kenneth may count himself very lucky,' said the elder son; 'I am sure I wish him joy.'

'And so you may, my lad,' cried Mr. McCullagh, measuring himself out a certain allowance of whisky, which was his regular custom, though he sometimes, often indeed, supplemented that certain allowance with 'an eke.' 'So you may. Kenneth is to have three thousand pounds down with her, that is settled upon his good wife, ye understand.'

'An' that's not all ye have to tell, Mister McCullagh,' here broke in Miss Nicol jubilantly, the while Robert was engaged in following Charles Lamb's example, and damning the unknown woman at a venture,—'that's not all; there's more to the back of it.'

'Do you mean more money?' asked Robert, looking in amazement from one to the other.

'Money's worth, money's worth,' said Mr. McCullagh complacently; 'there's, as I have said, three thousand to be tied up on the wife, and Kenneth is to be taken into partnership.'

Robert sat for a moment literally dumbfounded. If any one save his father had told him such a tale he would have said it was not true, and even as matters stood he could scarcely credit the evidence of his own ears. If it were so, how would his father receive the news he had a couple of hours before considered so good? There must be some hitch—the thing was not possible.

'But I always thought his master was in a large way of business,' he ventured after that moment's pause.

'So he is; he has a fine trade.'

'Then if that be the case, what is Kenneth to put in?'

'Just himself: no more, no less.'

'No money?'

'Deil a halfpenny. Ye see, the way of it's this,' and Mr. McCullagh, pushing his chair a little way from the table, waxed confidential: 'old Johnstone's not so young as he was, say, fifty year ago, and he begins to feel that. He has no son to take his place, and the business is getting a trifle too much for him. There is only the one daughter, and she has a fancy for Kenneth. The old man sees what Kenneth has in him, and considers she might

go a good deal further and fare a good deal worse. So, to cut a long story short, they talked and they better talked the matter over; and the upshot of it all is, Kenneth is to marry the daughter and take the management of the Liverpool business, while the father and mother go to Glasgow; they're Scotch, as ye're aware.'

'I could have sworn it!' thought Robert viciously, but he only said aloud he had not been aware of the fact.

'That's strange,' commented Mr. McCullagh; 'but to be sure, you and Kenneth never did stable your horses well together. However, to return to what I was saying, Mister and Mistress Johnstone go to Glasgow to spend the evening of their days among their own people (he has a branch house at Glasgow now), and the young wife and Kenneth will bide at Liverpool. It is a great chance for a beginner like him. Here's health and prosperity to them both, anyway;' and Mr. McCullagh drained his tumbler in indication of his sincerity.

'Here's health and prosperity to them both,' repeated Miss Nicol, sipping a little ale.

'Health and prosperity,' murmured Effie, almost in a whisper, to her glass of water.

'I am sure I wish them every happiness,' said Robert, following his father's example; but feeling at the same time he wished them nothing of the kind, and that the tidings he had just heard were gall and wormwood to him.

'When will you be coming to tell us something of the same sort, Robert?' asked Miss Nicol, with as much sly jauntiness as she could possibly induce her manner to assume.

'O, there's time enough,' Mr. McCullagh answered for him benignantly.

'I came here to-day to tell you something, sir,' said Robert, seizing this opportunity of speaking ere his courage oozed away altogether. 'I thought it pretty good news, but of course yours altogether dwarfs mine.'

'What is it like?' inquired Mr. McCullagh, drawing cautiously back into his shell as he asked the question, and dropping the almost convivial tone he had adopted. 'Are you going to be married too, Robert?'

'No, sir, I am not—at least, not at present.'

'When, then?' asked his parent.

'I am sure I do not know,' answered the young man. 'I must first find the lady.'

'Then what was it ye came here to tell me?'

'When you have quite finished your dinner I wish you would give me five minutes alone.'

'There is nothing to prevent your speaking out now,' answered Mr. McCullagh severely. 'We have no secrets among us in this house.'

'Still, sir—' began Robert.

'Well, well, if it must be so,' interrupted his father impatiently; and seizing the candle, and, without a word of apology, leaving Miss Nicol and her niece in a darkness scarcely relieved by a gleam of firelight, he led the way down the wide staircase to a room on the ground-floor, muttering as he did so the encouraging words, 'Pack o' nonsense!'

CHAPTER II.

MR. McCULLAGH'S ANTECEDENTS.

ACCIDENT had a larger share in compassing Mr. McCullagh's worldly prosperity than that gen-

tleman would have cared to acknowledge.

By this it is not meant that he might not have succeeded, no matter in what manner of craft he had essayed to brave the business seas. He was scarcely the man to sink in any waters; but it is open to question whether in other lines of life he would have done so well as chanced to be the case amongst jam-pots and casks of 'sweeties.'

He did not enter on the commercial voyage with any definite idea—or any idea, in fact, at all—of trading in Scotch goods. When he started for London he had no settled plan whatever, except to find a certain uncle Robert, who had done well for himself amongst the Southerners, and no convictions save that Greenock was too small for him, and that it was better to begin the business struggle unencumbered by the proximity of needy relations.

His father, the son of a right honest weaver at Paisley, who had brought up a large family on the slenderest of means, was a shop-keeper in a very small way at Greenock. Few things of a humble sort but were sold in that general shop—marbles and meal, candles and comfits, pork and pickles, salt herrings and stationery, butter and biscuits, threads and tea, to say nothing of salt, sugar, needles, pins, tape, gingerbread, flour, treacle, and all the hundred items the poor require daily, and most of which they can buy in pen-n'orths.

Early and late both father and mother worked, but all they could make barely served to keep the wolf from the door. They had to give credit or lose their customers, and sometimes the customers were dishonest, sometimes unfortunate; therefore, what with bad debts and the keep of many

children, the Greenock dealer found himself unable to get much before the world.

In the family annals frequent mention was made of a certain uncle Robert, who, being a 'sperrity chiel,' had done 'richt weel,' and sent his father and mother down now and again one-pound notes and presents of tea, flannel, coats, and suchlike.

He had walked every step of the way to the English metropolis. He 'took the notion' one fine day of trying his luck, and, starting with about ninepence in his pocket, literally 'worked' his journey to London. No job had been too hot or too heavy for this resolute boy; his adventures, so said his friends, with more truth than is generally to be found in the statements of friends, would have filled a book. Steadily he tramped on, refusing all offers of employment by the road, save such as supplied his daily need, till he reached London footsore, penniless, friendless.

Ere long, however, he got his chance—that chance which, 'tis said, comes once to every man—and improved it. 'And now,' observed his relations, 'he is quite a gentleman, has a big house and servants of his own, and is married to a minister's daughter.'

It may have been that these descriptions of wealth and distinction won in the vague English land fired the imagination of the younger Robert; or that, to use the idea common enough amongst the lower Irish, he 'strained after his namesake.' Anyhow, whatever the cause, the result was quite certain: Robert, the son of David, the son of Andrew, after carefully considering the result of all his parents' so early rising and so late taking rest, came to the conclusion he would follow his uncle Robert's example, and make London the

richer and Scotland the poorer by one leal man.

He did not, however, leave the paternal home in like case and with as little preparation.

He announced his intention, and was made somewhat a hero of in consequence. He wrote to his uncle when he might expect the felicity of seeing his kinsman. The whole family prepared presents wherewith to propitiate the Joseph who had gone down into Egypt. One remembered how fond Rab had been of this, and another how much Roebert had thought of that. By some means a good-sized hamper was filled, and the younger Roebert instructed how to produce these productions of fair Scotia by degrees, so as to allow no single delicacy to pass unnoticed — shortbread, mutton hams, hung beef, 'Finnan haddies,' some excellent marmalade, splendid currantjelly, cheese made from goats' milk, and various other specialties which all the McCullagh connection had contributed, to say nothing of some prime whisky—got one night on board the Belfast steamer at Greenock, and was carried away from the banks of the Clyde for ever. Arran and Ailsa faded from view, and Mr. Robert McCullagh, dreadfully seasick, disappeared likewise, and was seen no more till a wan semblance of himself appeared as the Scotch steamer made her way past Carrickfergus Castle.

The young fellow, who was known and trusted in his native town, carried commissions with him to Belfast, Dublin, and London that more than recouped all he had to spend on the round-about sea-voyage; and, so far, the advantage was with him over his more adventurous relative.

On the other hand, he missed many an experience his namesake

found useful to him in his after life, and arrived in London as ignorant and as prejudiced as when he walked across the gangway from the quay to the steamer's deck at Greenock.

If, in the course of events, it had so occurred that his uncle could have given the raw young Scotchman a start in life, his whole career had never been chronicled in these pages.

He would have commenced his London experiences under totally different auspices: been found a desk, if not in his uncle's office, at least in the office of some acquaintance, where he would have thought himself lucky if he gained an advance of ten pounds a year, and succeeded at thirty to the post and salary of manager, or gained such a connection as would enable him, with the help of what he might have saved and a fair amount of credit, to start on his own account.

This is most probably what would have occurred had he found the person he expected ready to greet his arrival in London. It is what happens to most steady young men who come to the City to make their fortune. They fall into a certain groove and continue in it. The element of chance enters very little into their subsequent success or failure; men *travel* through life when a beaten road is pointed out for them to take; they *explore* life when thrown on their own resources in a strange place, without a single soul to say, 'This is your way.'

Young McCullagh, when he arrived in London, found himself in a very unknown region indeed, and placed in a very difficult position; he had calculated upon his uncle's assistance, and behold his uncle was dead. He had been buried four days before Robert, arrayed in his best suit of clothes,

the cut of which could not be considered fashionable, walked into the office in Benet's-hill and asked to see him.

'I am afraid ye can't do that,' answered a middle-aged man, in accents which struck home to Robert's heart as broadly delightfully Scotch, 'for he's deid.'

Robert staggered back as if the speaker had struck him a blow between the eyes.

'Deid!' he repeated next instant incredulously; 'ye're jokin'.'

'Deed I was not; what for would I joke? It is not much of a joke to him, I'm-a-thinking.'

From which remark it need not be inferred the speaker felt any fear concerning his late principal's position in the next world. All he meant was that Mr. McCullagh's standing in this had been so good, it seemed a pity he was compelled, *nolens volens*, to relinquish it.

'Didn't ye know?' went on the clerk, looking with grave curiosity at Robert, who was, indeed, thrown quite off his balance by the sudden check he thus met. 'Didn't ye know?'

'Know! If I had known I wouldn't be here!' retorted this latest importation from the Land o' Cakes. 'Know! how should I know? The last letter we had from him he was well and like being well.'

'You were acquent with him, then?' this tentatively.

'Acquent? no. I never set eyes on him in all my life; but he was my uncle.'

'Ye don't mean that!'—the expression of incredulity was natural if not complimentary.

'I do, and that's why I came to London. O, why couldn't he have died before or after?'

The young fellow's distress was very genuine. It was the most genuine of all distress, indeed—

that which appertains to self; but, perhaps, for this very reason it failed to touch his countryman.

'Did ye think he'd give ye a berth?' asked the clerk.

'Ay, or find me one.'

'And what will ye do now?'

'I don't know; go hang myself, maybe.'

'I wouldn't do that yet,' advised the other. 'I'd go first, I think, and see Mistress McCullagh.'

'What like is she?'

'I never saw her to my knowledge; but no doubt she could help ye.'

'Who is keeping on this business?' asked the young man, instead of instantly profiting by his friend's advice. 'Had he a partner?'

'No, nobody but his own self. Mr. Frickell, who was his chief clerk, is managing the business. He will keep things going till the son is of age; but I wouldn't see him, if I was you; he'd only have to ask the mistress, and you may as well ask her direct. It wouldn't be so easy for her to refuse you as another.'

It was poor advice; but as it seemed the best he was likely to obtain, Robert McCullagh made his way straight to Doughty-street, where his uncle, when living, had resided.

How different the aspect of the streets from that they had borne an hour previously! Then, they seemed paved with gold; now, the young man felt he had never trodden drearier flintier thoroughfares.

Arrived in Doughty-street, he found much difficulty: first, in making the servant understand what he wanted; and second, in inducing her to convey his message up-stairs; but at length he succeeded so far in his endeavours as to find himself in a good-sized

apartment situate on the ground-floor, awaiting his aunt's appearance.

After keeping him waiting for about ten minutes she appeared: a, to him, awful presence—a 'fashionable madam,' he said afterwards, 'with her cap-strings flying and her dress rustling, and her head well up in the air; and so full of conceit she scarce seemed to like to think her feet touched the carpet.'

'You wished to see me,' she said, in what he mentally called her mincing English tongue; 'you sent your name in, I think, as—as Mr. Robert McCullagh.'

'That is right,' he answered. 'I am sore grieved to hear of your husband's death. He was my uncle, ye'll understand.'

The lady touched her eyes with a very fine pocket-handkerchief; then running her fingers dreamily round the stitched border she remarked, 'I always knew, he always led me to understand, he had some very poor relations.'

'As to that—' began the young fellow hotly; then he stopped, feeling discretion might, in this case, be the better part of valour. 'Your husband was poor himself when he came to London,' he went on, after a moment's pause, 'and he never forgot those he left poor behind him. If he had lived, I hoped—I know he would have given me a helping hand to make my way too; and so I venture to ask if you will be so very good as to write a word or two to your manager and bid him find me something to do, no matter how small, I don't care what it is, till I can turn myself round a bit. I'll carry out parcels or sweep the office.'

She crossed her soft white hands one over the other and surveyed them complacently ere she answered

'That would not do at all.'

'Then what will do?' he asked, all in a hurry. 'I'll not stand nice, whatever you bid me turn to. I'll try my hardest to please ye.'

'You see,' she said, not answering his question direct, but still caressing those fair false hands, 'I have my children to consider.'

'The Lord forbid I should prevent your doing that!' he exclaimed, with fervour.

'And I am afraid it would be a sad drawback to them hereafter if people knew their father had such sadly necessitous relations.'

There was that in her tone which aroused all Robert's resentment.

'We're willing to work for what we eat, ma'am,' he said a little hotly.

'Yes, but don't you see—' she began, and then paused and hesitated. 'I am afraid,' she continued sweetly, 'I can scarcely explain what I mean without hurting your feelings.'

'Don't mind my feelings a hair,' said Robert energetically.

'You really are very good, and your goodness makes it all the harder for me to say that I really am afraid I cannot do much to help you! I could not possibly have you at the office; you see you stand now where my husband began, and his children where he left off. They are in the rank he raised himself to, and you are in the rank he rose from.'

'And do you think, mem, I couldn't raise myself too?' in a gradual crescendo, delivered in forcible Scotch.

'I hope and trust you will,' was the reply; 'but I would rather it was not near us. I am afraid I must seem somewhat unkind; but as for giving you a situation in the office where my son will one day be principal, it's

a thing not to be thought of. My poor husband was always anxious for his children to rise in the world (he thought a great deal of the world, Mr. Robert; though a truly religious man he attached great weight to its opinions and prejudices), and I really could not, now he is no longer here, run counter to what I know were his cherished convictions;’ and Mrs. McCullagh, having with Spartan firmness given expression to this resolve, put her handkerchief to her eyes and wept a little.

Robert looked at her with a feeling of impotent aversion he was at no pains to conceal.

‘I’m very certain, mem,’ he said, ‘that your poor husband, as ye call him, would never have wished ye to put a slight on one of the stock he sprang from; but, however, that is all past and gone. There’s no use talking about last year’s snow, or about help from a man who is lying in his grave; so here’s wishing you good-morning, mem;’ and the speaker made a step towards the door.

She had not hoped to get rid of him so easily. She had dreaded remonstrances and importunities, reproaches and all the disagreeable items which make up, as a rule, the adjuncts of a regular scene. She ought accordingly to have felt relieved and thankful; and yet there was something in the young man’s face and manner which caused her to fear his silence more than another’s wrath.

‘I am sure,’ she began, rising, but making no gesture of farewell, ‘I sympathise with you most truly. I can understand how bitterly disappointed you must feel. You will admit yourself hereafter, I think, it was a wild-goose chase coming to London; but that does not make your posi-

tion any less hard now. You will want money to return home. Most likely you depended upon receiving some pecuniary assistance from your uncle; you must allow me to help you. As you may imagine, I have been put to heavy expenses of late; but so far as ten pounds go, I can manage. Will ten pounds be enough?’ she added, looking with a certain fascination at the inscrutable smile his lips wore.

‘Thank ye,’ he said; ‘ten pounds will be more than enough.’

‘You are quite welcome to that,’ she answered, relieved; and drawing out her purse she laid down ten golden guineas on the table-cover.

Robert watched her in silence, looking sometimes at the money, as she placed one piece beside another, then at her still handsome face, again considering her white hands and taper fingers.

‘You are sure that will be sufficient?’ she said questioningly.

‘Sure and certain,’ he replied, stretching out his hand, which was hard and brown, and showed evidence of the work it had already done, and pushing the gold across to where she stood. ‘Take back your money, mem, and much good may it do you. I am not a beggar, and I am not going back to my own country; and maybe some day ye’ll meet me where ye would rather not, and remember ye refused me what I asked when ye may wish to forget it.’

Having delivered himself of which astounding sentence, which the lady felt mentally much as she might physically the cut of a whip, Robert walked out of the room, opened the hall-door for himself, and found himself in the street.

The whole world of London was before him, yet he decided to retrace his steps to St. Benet’s-hill.

'Well, did ye see her?' asked his countryman.

'O, ay, I saw her right enough,' he answered.

'And what is she going to do for you?' inquired the other, who certainly expected Mr. McCullagh's nephew had come back to take possession of a stool in the office which chanced at that moment to be vacant.

'Nothing,' was the explicit answer.

'Nothing?' repeated the listener.

'Just that,' agreed Robert.

'Why, what reason did she give? didn't she believe you were his nephew?'

'No fear of that; she believed it true enough, but she wants none of his kith or kin coming after her.'

'No?' this interrogatively, and without committing the speaker to any opinion with respect to Mrs. McCullagh's wishes.

'She's a wonderful woman,' went on the young man, 'with her fal-lals and streamers. She has crape on her dress a yard deep, but I misdoubt her if she has a bit of grief in her heart. She made believe to cry once or twice, but she was not able to wring out a tear.'

'She's left sole executrix,' said the other mysteriously.

'I am not surprised. I deemed as much,' was the answer.

'And what do ye think ye'll do now?' asked the clerk, who thought perhaps the interview had lasted almost as long as was prudent, and seemed somewhat desirous of bringing it to a close.

'I don't know—I can't tell, man; it takes more than an hour or two to get over a shock of this sort.'

'That's true. Ye'll maybe be considering about going back again.'

'Do ye mean home to Scot-

land? No, I won't go back there. I'm just as well here; wherein Mr. McCullagh conveyed, perhaps unintentionally, the reason why so few Scotch youths ever do retrace their steps northward.

'I won't say ye're wrong,' remarked the other.

'No, I'm right; there's work of a certainty to be found in a big town like this.'

'Ay, but the trouble's to find it.'

'She wanted me to go back. She counted down ten golden guineas for the purpose.'

'Did she, now?'

'And I told her to keep her money, that I wanted none of it.'

'Man, wasn't that foolish?' exclaimed the clerk.

'Well, I'll admit it maybe wasn't over-wise,' conceded Robert, 'but she angered me. I felt just beside myself with rage.'

'It's aye best to keep cool,' said the other; 'see now, if ye'd kept cool ye might have been ten guineas the richer, and I dare believe ye're not overburdened with money.'

'I could do with more,' answered Robert dryly.

'Well, I am afraid I can't stand talking to you any longer,' remarked his countryman. 'Mr. Frickell mightn't like it. But if you think I can help you with advice, or speaking a word, I shall be going out to my dinner in about half an hour, and ye might wait for me at the tavern round the corner in Thames-street.'

'Thank you, I'll do that,' said the future merchant; 'and maybe ye could put me in the way of finding a decent lodging.'

'No doubt I might,' was the answer; and so they parted.

When they met again, which they did duly and truly at the expiration of half an hour, Mr. Anderson—such being the name

of the late Mr. McCullagh's clerk—told the young man he could recommend him to a very decent house, where, if the lodgings did not chance to be vacant, he would certainly be directed to some that were.

Over a glass of toddy, compounded in haste and swallowed with precipitation, the pair cemented a friendship which it is only right to say remained unimpaired through years; and Mr. Anderson said he would just turn the matter over in his mind, and consider whether he could not send his master's nephew to some one likely to give 'him employ.'

'Ye say ye don't mind what ye do,' he remarked, as if seeking for confirmation of the truth of that statement.

'Not a bit, except stand idle,' was the ready answer.

'Well, well, just content yourself for a day or two, and I'll see what can be done. Only mind, don't come near our office. Now the mistress is set against you it might be worth my place to be seen talking to you.'

The young fellow nodded. 'A word to the wise,' we know, is sufficient; and for his years and opportunities he was wonderfully wise—'pawky,' as he might himself have said.

'I'll no' bring ye into trouble,' he answered reassuringly.

Mr. Anderson proved much better than his word. The very next day Robert received intelligence that a certain Mr. McHaffey, who had sensibly abbreviated his name to Haffey, could find something for him to do till he had time to 'look round,' and the young fellow accordingly found himself the same afternoon seated at a desk in a wholesale potato warehouse situate in Tooley-street, where his duties, though constant, were not so

onerous as to preclude his devoting much time and a considerable amount of thought as to how he was to push himself on in the world. It was then chance directed his future steps into the 'Scotch trade.' No need to state that of the various delicacies he brought to London as propitiatory gifts for his uncle, Mrs. McCullagh never beheld even a pot of marmalade. All the store which would keep he kept, giving the more perishable articles, such as 'Finnan haddies,' to Mr. Anderson. Far too careful to consume luxuries of any sort himself, he found as time went on that he could 'place' most of his good things advantageously as presents.

'He lost nothing by it,' to use his own expression; he found the English generous, and a well-bested mutton ham or paper of 'sweeties' returned him many and many a time admirable interest.

Little by little he planted his stock out, without any idea of ultimate profit except that which might accrue in the way of social intercourse or business friendship from such small offerings; but after a time, to his astonishment, he began to be asked to procure further supplies of articles so exceptionally excellent.

He had not dreamt of any such result; but when he saw fruit so soon ripening where he had dropped his little presents into the ground, he began to ask himself whether here might not be an opening; whether in this way, and without interfering in the least with his present occupation, he could not commence to turn an honest penny. At the end of his cogitations he wrote down to his father:

'I think I could "do a wee" if I had some of these things in London to sell. All I brought up was well liked, and the people I gave them to would cheerfully pay

for more. When Duncan Stewart comes to London I wish you could put up a hamper and let him bring it. If you can't lie out of the siller I will manage to scrape enough together and send it down.'

But somehow Mr. McCullagh senior did manage to 'lie out o' the siller' and send the order.

Ere long his son returned the money, accompanied by an order for a further supply of goods, which were this time to be despatched by sea. 'I believe there is something to be done,' wrote the young man; and when his father read the letter, he said, 'If there is anything to be done he'll do it,' while his mother observed, 'She had always been very sure Rabbie would light on his feet.'

Little by little, month by month, year by year, the business grew and flourished. Those were not the days, remember, reader, when housewives thought it was cheaper to buy preserves than to make them, and when they believed raspberry and currant jams could be obtained just as genuine from the nearest oilman as out of their copper pans. Bought articles had then to be very pure and very excellent to stand the test of domestic competition. Women at that remote period knew how to do many things which bid fair ere long to be reckoned amongst the lost arts; they could spice beef, and make pickles, and manufacture cheese-cakes; and therefore goods turned out wholesale had to be very good indeed to bear comparison with those produced at home.

Now everything Mr. McCullagh sold was of the very best quality, and his fame and his connection gradually swelled, till he felt himself justified in giving Mr. Haffey notice and taking a little cellar in Wormwood-street.

'It's an awful risk,' he said to Mr. Anderson, referring to the rent, which was ten pounds sterling a year; 'but I believe I can make it off. I'll try my hardest, at any rate.'

When a man tries his hardest he generally succeeds, and Mr. Robert McCullagh succeeded. Through his father, who, though a poor man, was well known as an honest one, he first got a certain amount of credit from a large wholesale house; that house was his reference when in turn he wanted to deal with another in a somewhat different line of business. How his trade grew he could scarcely have told; but it did grow, and ere he had been six years in London he found himself in a position to negotiate for the house in Basinghall-street and take a wife.

They were two momentous steps to venture upon in the course of a single twelvemonth, but Robert McCullagh did not lack courage. If the wife did not turn out so good an investment as the house it was scarcely his fault. A business can be entered upon by degrees—not so marriage; a man can get rid of a business—he cannot get rid of a wife; he can mould and shape his trade—he who can mould and shape a wife must be clever indeed.

In his after life Mr. McCullagh never referred to the period when there was a Mistress McCullagh. Wisely, perhaps, he permitted that part of his experience to lapse. The matrimonial venture did not on the whole prove a success, and the wife wisely and considerably resolved the distasteful partnership in the best way possible—she died.

But before she died she left behind some very tangible proofs of her existence in the shape of four healthy boys. In her hus-

band's memory she left marks, perhaps, even more traceable.

For the marriage proved most unhappy: not as marriages do in the modern sense, in an era when men and women can slip off the yoke as easily as a loose garment, but in a perhaps more wearing and unpleasant, though less public, manner.

How irksome he had felt her companionship, or rather want of companionship, he scarcely realised till he was relieved of it for ever. She, on the contrary, understood perfectly well how totally uncongenial she found him, and, as is the manner of some wives, she took the whole of her own little world into her confidence on the subject of his shortcomings.

No more unsuitably mated couple probably ever vexed each the other's soul for nearly ten weary years. She could scarcely open her lips without uttering some remark antagonistic to his habits and prejudices, and she kept fluttering against the bars of the matrimonial cage like some poor foolish bird who thinks its feeble efforts can compass liberty.

And yet in no one essential point could Mr. McCullagh be considered a bad husband. He did not starve his wife or beat her, he did not drink, he did not give her even a pretext for jealousy; according to his lights he was just, and on occasion could be generous; but still, as she said, 'his ways broke her heart,' and those who knew her best always believed she died as much from inability to bend his will as from disease.

When he first met her at the house of a mutual acquaintance she was a young silly girl, the only child of a small builder, reported to be worth some money; perfectly destitute of mental resources—possessed of a pretty face,

a slight graceful figure, a fluent tongue, an incessant laugh, high spirits, and a love of dress and admiration.

Whether Mr. McCullagh admired her or not is open to question. He said she was a 'bonnie lass' and had 'nice eyes of her own,' but whether he had ever quite forgotten a certain other 'lassie' left behind in Scotland, who was as unlike Annie Mostin as we are led to believe Norah Creina was unlike Lesbia, is, to say the least of the matter, doubtful.

What could be considered by no means doubtful, however, is that he liked the notion of her money. He wanted a house-keeper, and he desired a home; he wished to have 'his meals regular.' It struck him that a wife, more especially one who did not come with her hand empty, might enable him to secure all these advantages upon very easy terms. Then certainly she was pretty; if she did not chance to be quite the style he most admired, it would have been hard for any man to look upon her face without favour. Further, she admired him; perhaps because he was different from all the men she had previously come in contact with; perhaps also because he took less notice of her. Add to these reasons that they were both young, that the lady, at whose house they often met, was an enthusiastic match-maker, that Mr. Mostin's worldly and social position was much above that of the young Scotch plodder, and it may easily be imagined Robert McCullagh soon began to weigh the pros and cons of 'telling her his mind,' and ere long decided the beam inclined to matrimony.

'I'll just marry her,' he said to himself; and as neither Mrs. Mostin nor her father threw any obstacles in his way, he did marry

her, and repented doing so every after hour of his wedded life.

It never occurred to him, never once, that when she became a wife she would not 'settle down.' He had been wont to regard her flighty ways, her foolish laughter, her silly talk, just as a horse-dealer might view the antics of a colt.

'You'll soon get out of all that,' he considered, regarding her and her girlish companions with grim disapproval. 'It is a wonder to see young women of their age getting on like children.' But after marriage Mrs. McCullagh did not get out of it; she never got out of it: she was a silly girl, a silly wife, a silly mother.

'I have seen wee lassies of six years old that had more sense,' he told her often; to which Mrs. McCullagh would answer, 'Wee indeed!' in a tone of scathing irony.

Ridicule was the only weapon at her command, and she used it unsparingly.

Under her utterances Mr. McCullagh often writhed, but the principal feeling her mimicry excited was hatred.

When 'courting' he had been wont to expatiate upon the superiority of his native tongue, and to give the young lady examples from the poetry of Burns, Motherwell, Allan Ramsay, and other writers of the power inherent in 'braid Scotch' to express love, regret, anger, enthusiasm, fidelity, and so forth.

While landing her fish, Miss Mostin was quite ready to believe, and perhaps did believe, 'luve' to be superior to 'love,' 'greet' to 'cry,' 'leal' to 'loyal,' and 'bairn' to 'child;' but when once the knot was tied, and she found herself bound for the term of her natural life to her husband's vernacular, a change came o'er the spirit of her dream, and she

never employed a Scottish phrase save to make fun of it.

To Mr. McCullagh—who believed in his native land as he believed in his Bible; who regarded the 'English tongue' as effeminate and inexpressive; who considered the speech of Southerners to be in comparison to vigorous Scotch as moonlight is to sunlight, as water unto wine—her little mimicries, her foolish ridicule, her most ill-advised mockery proved intensely galling. He could, perhaps, have pardoned her a sin, but he could not forgive the slights she put on himself and his country.

And the worst of it was, he could not speak without giving her a handle, which she was generally swift to use. In all their domestic disagreements—which were many, and in which she invariably came off worsted—both argument and rebuke were ended by some absurd mimicry of his way of speaking. She was not a good mimic either, which made it all the harder to bear.

'I never did lift my hand against a woman, but I feel often sorely tempted,' he declared once, in a moment of exasperation; and, indeed, it often seemed as though she were trying to work him up to some deed of violence.

Those who knew the McCullaghs well always declared that the first quarrel occurred over their first *tête-à-tête* breakfast in the honeymoon, and that the cause of it was a piece of toast.

They were on a journey which it was hoped would combine business and pleasure, and at the hotel where they stopped a round of buttered toast was brought up in a covered dish.

'Isn't that like an inn?' said Mrs. McCullagh, the moment the waiter left the room, turning over the toast as she spoke.

Mr. McCullagh did not answer :

he had not the faintest idea what she meant, and did not like to confess his ignorance; so dropped his eyes again on the paper, which had made its appearance with breakfast, and remained silent.

Happening to look up again in a minute, he saw his wife buttering the toast.

'What are ye doin'?' he asked; 'sure, the toast was buttered.'

'Only on one side,' she replied gaily.

'Put down the knife!' he cried, 'put down the knife! Lord's sake, are ye out of yer senses? Most folk are glad enough to have their bread buttered on one side, without wantin' it on both. I never heard tell of such a thing! Ye won't have your toast buttered on both sides by me, I can warrant ye that!'

Nor had she. In some shape or form she was always trying to get her toast buttered on both sides; but Mr. McCullagh would not permit her one single luxury of which he disapproved. Their whole married life was a long struggle on her part and a stern repression on his, and not a day passed on which she did not want something which he refused. She never learnt sense, and he never grew tired of saying no. It was an unequal struggle; for she had no advantage on her side, save persistency, and in that he was her equal, opposing a firm resistance to her constant endeavours at encroachment.

Even the one social weapon she at first possessed in the shape of her father's position, and the yearly amount he allowed her, soon snapped in her hands. Her father failed. He had long been in difficulties, unsuspected by the outer world, but well understood by himself; and at last he was obliged to appeal for assistance to his son-in-law.

He sent for him one morning, and, standing in the middle of his yard, filled with building materials, surrounded by many outward and visible signs of prosperity, he said,

'I am very sorry to tell you, Robert, that if I cannot get some assistance I shall have to stop.'

'Ay, indeed,' said Robert coolly, though really he felt almost stricken dumb; 'I am grieved to hear it.'

'Yes, it is a bad job; and it is a pity too for a business like this to go to pieces.'

'It is that,' agreed his son-in-law.

'If I had a thousand pounds, if I had five hundred of ready cash, I could carry on.'

'Could ye, now?'

'Yes; I have contracts in hand that would soon enable me to turn myself round.'

'Wouldn't your bankers help ye?'

'They would help me, if I could give them any sort of security.'

'Well, surely ye ought to have no difficulty about that, and you so well known.'

'Yes; but don't you see, if I go about amongst my friends asking for help, it will be at once thought my affairs have got embarrassed.'

'They are embarrassed, though, aren't they?' said his son-in-law simply.

'Of course; nevertheless, there is no need to tell that to everybody.'

'No, not unless ye think the body ye tell can help ye.'

'I don't know anybody I think can help me except yourself.'

'And I am very sure I don't see how I can do that; ye don't suppose I have five hundred pounds or five hundred pence lying idle?'

'No, but you might join me in

getting what I want ; my bankers will advance what I need if I take them a good name on a bill ;' and the speaker paused, and looked at Mr. McCullagh, who did not answer a word, but stood looking intently at a chimney-pot waiting removal.

'It could not take a sixpence out of your pocket,' went on Mr. Mostin eagerly ; 'and it would enable me to turn a very ugly corner. Come into the office and I'll show you the contracts I spoke of, and then you can see for yourself ; come ;' and he laid a persuasive hand on his son-in-law's arm.

'No, I don't think I'll go in,' said the other slowly, at the sametime quietly releasing himself from Mr. Mostin's grasp. 'I am very sorry, on every account, to hear what ye say ; but it is not in my power to help ye. I couldn't do what ye want,' he added, seeing Mr. Mostin about to speak ; 'and I hope ye won't press me, because now ye are in trouble I don't want to say anything to hurt you. I am a young beginner, and I have got a wife, and I have got a child, and it would not be right for me to do anything of the sort.'

'But you would never be called upon for a penny,' urged his father-in-law.

'That's just as it might be ; at any rate, I'll not run the risk. I'd never have a night's sound rest till the bill came due ; and maybe I'd never have a sound night's rest after. I'm real vexed to have to refuse ye ; but I couldn't do it, I could not indeed.'

In which determination Mr. McCullagh evinced his usual excellent judgment ; for when Mr. Mostin's affairs came to be wound up, or rather unwound, it was proved conclusively that eight times five hundred pounds would not have enabled him to sur-

mount his difficulties, and that the builder himself least, of all persons interested in the matter, understood how he was situated.

Mrs. McCullagh, however, always chose to believe her husband could have 'saved her father' had he pleased to do so ; and his conduct on this occasion alienated the ill-matched couple, if possible, further from each other.

Mr. Mostin's bankruptcy had also this further evil effect : it enabled Mr. McCullagh, whenever his wife, jeering at his circumscribed ideas and parsimonious ways, pointed hersentence with the remark, 'We never thought of such things at home,' 'I was not brought up to consider cheese-parings,' or, 'I would not have married if I had known I was to be nothing better than a household drudge,' to say,

'Maybe if ye had thought a bit more of such things at home it might have been better for ye ;' or, 'It's a pity ye had not been brought up in a different manner ;' or, 'If ye had not been married ye would have been forced now to turn out and earn your own bread ;' all statements with which, on the score of veracity, no exception could be found, but which were exceedingly hard to bear for all that.

For his father-in-law, Mr. McCullagh, when the worst came, showed a consideration which could scarcely have been expected from him. He said, when the messenger entered into possession of the yard and house and offices and furniture,

'Ye had better come round and take a bed with us. There's room enough, and you're welcome to share what's going ; and if ye would like to employ yourself I can find ye some writing, and pay ye ten or fifteen shillings a week till ye are out of your trouble ;' an

offer Mr. Mostin declined with many thanks, and which his daughter construed into a desire, on her husband's part, to insult the family.

'Maybe it was an insult to offer a man board and lodging and wages,' agreed Mr. McCullagh dryly; 'but I did not intend it as an affront, and I don't think your father took it as such.'

The years went by, passed in perpetual bickering, till at last, as might have been expected, Mrs. McCullagh fell into a bad state of health, and drooped slowly out of life.

She was ill for a considerable time—eighteen months and more—and it was whilst she faded away by almost imperceptible degrees that Mr. McCullagh wrote for the presence and assistance of his kinswoman, Miss Nicol.

All in vain Mrs. McCullagh said she would not remain in the house if a 'strange woman' were set in authority over it. Mr. McCullagh asked simply where she meant to go, and whether she really thought he would permit the house to go to wreck and ruin, and the children to run wild, so long as there was anybody to be found who would keep 'things together.'

'You'll marry her, I suppose, when I'm dead,' wept Mrs. McCullagh.

Her husband looked at her with a singular expression, and answered, with caustic irony,

'I think I'll no' do that. I have had about enough of marriage to last me my lifetime.'

'You never liked me,' whimpered Mrs. McCullagh weakly.

'I liked you well enough,' answered her husband, 'and I'd have liked you better if you had had any sense or could have learned any; but there's no use talking about that now,' added

Mr. McCullagh hurriedly, and not without a touch of feeling in his voice, 'no use at all.'

'No,' she agreed, 'it is of no use talking about anything now; it is too late, too late,' and she turned her head aside, and pressed her cheek upon the pillow, to hide the tears he knew were falling.

'I wouldn't do that, Annie,' said Mr. McCullagh, drawing the shawl which had fallen from his wife's shoulders around her with more tenderness than might have been expected from him. 'Ye'll only hurt yourself.'

But she wept on bitterly. Perhaps at the moment she was thinking if she had only understood something of the virtue of silence that first morning when she wanted her toast buttered on both sides, life might have proved happier than she had found it!

CHAPTER III.

FATHER AND SON.

'Now then,' said Mr. McCullagh, when he and his firstborn were safely shut in the ground-floor room, which Robert too well remembered as the place where many a pitched battle between his mother and father was fought, and lost by the former, 'what is this weighty matter that can only be told with closed doors?'

There was a sneer both of contempt and irritability in Mr. McCullagh's tone; but it suited the younger man to take no notice of the fact, and he replied, with an assumption of careless jocularly he was far from feeling,

'I thought mine would be great news till I found Kenneth had taken the wind out of my sails.'

'Well, whatever it may be, tell me at once, that is if ye think fit.'

'I came here for no other pur-

pose, father,' was the answer; 'but I confess I do not care to talk about private affairs, more especially affairs that are still doubtful, before Miss Nicol and Effie.'

'Ye might talk before two worse people,' remarked Mr. McCullagh dryly.

'Very likely; but I do not see the necessity of talking before any one. If the slightest chatter came round to Mr. Pousnett's ears it might spoil all my chances.'

'Pousnett has to do with the matter, I suppose,' surmised the Scotch merchant.

'Yes; he has offered me a partnership.'

'Offered—you—a partnership?' repeated Mr. McCullagh. 'Well, you do astonish me!' and he looked at his astonishment. 'Its no credible,' and he sat silent a moment, whether stricken dumb by the consideration of his son's good fortune or Mr. Pousnett's folly did not transpire.

'I felt incredulous at first,' said Robert, thinking to follow up the advantage he fancied he had gained.

'I don't wonder at that,' said his father dryly.

'But it is coupled,' went on the young man, 'with a condition.'

'There's a condection, is there?' commented Mr. McCullagh.

'Yes, and one perhaps you may not like just at the first.'

'I can't judge of that till you tell me what it is.'

'He makes it a *sine quâ non* for me to bring in seven thousand pounds.'

'Ay indeed.'

'He wanted ten thousand, but finally consented to take seven.'

'It's an awful lot o' siller.'

'Of course, seven or even ten is nothing to such a firm, but he requires a certain amount to be invested so as to bind my interests and those of the house together.

I know I might never again have such a chance; but I told him I could do nothing till I talked the matter over with you, so he has given me a fortnight in which to make up my mind.'

'Well, and what d'ye think ye'll do?'

'That depends almost, if not entirely, on you, sir.'

'On me! How can I have any say in the matter?'

'Of course, unless you can help me to the money—'

'Help ye! For peety's sake speak out, man. Ye don't suppose I have seven thousand pounds lying idle in my breeches-pocket!'

'No, certainly; but your name is good for seven times seven thousand, or for more even than that, and I am sure Mr. Pousnett would take your security for the amount with pleasure.'

'And I'm sure that is very good of him,' said Mr. McCullagh; but whether he spoke in jest or earnest no man who had not known him well could have told.

'I can live on little,' proceeded Robert, 'and I would not touch a penny of my share of the profits beyond the merest trifle till you were paid back.'

'No doubt,' commented his father.

'And it is such a splendid opening,' went on his son.

'If ye think so I hope ye'll be able to avail yourself of it.'

'I shall not without your help, sir.'

Putting this remark judiciously on one side by the simple process of ignoring it altogether, Mr. McCullagh observed,

'How does it chance Pousnetts' firm wants another partner? I thought ye had enough and to spare of able-bodied and strong-minded men there already?'

'Well, the fact is—you won't mention this, will you?'

'No, I'll mention nothing ye want kept hid. What is the fact?'

'There is going to be a split in Pousnetts' firm.'

'Ye don't say so!' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh, his attention and curiosity fully aroused.

'It is quite true; Mr. Pousnett told me himself. Mr. Giles is going to start altogether on his own account at Liverpool. Mr. Hinton means to go out to Bombay and establish a business something of the same sort there. Mr. Hume Pousnett sails early in the year to open a branch at Melbourne, and his brother, young Mr. Stanley, takes his place here.'

'Lord bless and save us!' ejaculated Mr. McCullagh. 'It is like a bit out of one of the chronological chapters in the Screeptures.'

'So you see, sir, the house could not do without taking in one partner, to say the least of it.'

'I should have thought,' said Mr. McCullagh, as he spoke producing his snuff-box and taking thereout a pinch which he held suspended between his finger and thumb till he had finished his sentence,—'I should have thought Pousnetts might have had their pick and choice of the best in London.'

'So they might, so they might,' interrupted Robert eagerly.

'And what puzzles me,' comforting his nostrils with that deferred pinch, 'is *why they would take you?*'

There was nothing remarkable in his words, but the tone in which Mr. McCullagh spoke italicised every one of them. It implied, 'Here is a poor, weak, vain, useless creature; what *can* a big firm like that want with a brainless idiot I would not give a pound a week to for entering goods in the day-book?'

'You see I know all the ins

and outs of the business,' remarked Robert deprecatingly.

'Well, there's something in that,' conceded his father.

'And I do think Mr. Pousnett has a regard for me.'

'There's no telling,' said Mr. McCullagh, in a manner that suggested, however incredible the statement seemed to him, he did not desire to contradict it as impossible.

'He has always taken more notice of me than of anybody else about the office.'

'I make no doubt you have done your best for him,' was the reply.

'Indeed, I have; I felt it both a pleasure and an honour to work for such a perfect gentleman. Why, there are fellows I know in the City ready to knock me down for envy, many a time, when they see me so much thought of!'

'I always said it was very wonderful,' observed Mr. McCullagh.

'And now to think of my being offered a partnership—why, men who have been fifty years on 'Change would jump at such a chance!'

'If it had been offered to one of them, I should not have been as much surprised.'

'And yet you see he passes over them, and comes to me.'

'That is the puzzle of it,' observed Mr. McCullagh.

'I know you would not offer me a partnership, father,' said his son, a little bitterly.

'I'd offer one to no man,' was the answer. 'So long as there are clerks to be had for a weekly wage, I'll content myself, and try to carry on my business single-handed.'

'I won't say but you are right,' said Robert reflectively.

'Ye needn't, because I know I

am right. What I have, I have made for myself; what I own, I'll keep for myself.'

They were getting very wide now of the real matter in hand, so wide that Robert felt they were drifting out to sea altogether, and he therefore ventured to recall his father to Mr. Pousnett's offer, by asking,

'What do you say to it, sir?'

'What do I say to what?' returned Mr. McCullagh sharply.

'To this proposal to become a partner.'

'I say it sounds to me much like a suggestion as to whether you would like to go to the moon, or take unto yourself wings and flee across the Atlantic. The one thing is just as feasible as the other. In the name of common sense, where would you get seven thousand pounds to run the chance of profit and loss in any house?'

'It's mostly profit in our house, father.'

'Granted; we'll grant Pousnetts' is an exception to most rules; that is, there is not a particle of risk in the matter. Where are you to get seven thousand pounds, or seven hundred, for the matter of that?'

'Nowhere, sir, unless you will give a helping hand,' said Robert, sticking to his previous text.

'Me! Do you think I am out of my mind?'

'No, I do not; but as this is a chance which may never offer again—'

'That is what every man says who comes a-begging,' observed Mr. McCullagh. 'I mean no offence to you,' he added, seeing his son wince and colour. 'I spoke in general terms. Whenever a man wants credit, or a loan, or a reference, or anything you don't feel well inclined to give him, he says such a chance cannot come

his way any more. The minute I hear that phrase, that minute I put up my purse. You'll have plenty more chances, Robert. I am older than you; and you may take my word, the openings that seem the most likely are those which, as a rule, take a man straight to the bottom of this street, and leave him there.'

'Yet you seem to think well of the opening which has come to Kenneth,' ventured Kenneth's brother.

'That's a horse of quite another colour,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'just as Kenneth himself is quite another sort from you. To a certain extent, I can see the why and the because of his good fortune; but I can't make head or tail of Pousnetts' wanting you, and seven thousand pounds in your hand. It beats me, Robert. Most times I can see daylight; but now I confess I am lost—I can't discern even my hand before me.'

'I thought you would be glad and proud, father,' remonstrated the young man, mortified; 'but then I might have known how it would be: you never thought anything of my mother, and you'll never think anything of me, because I am like her, and I can't take to Scotch ways or Scotch people.'

'We'll let your mother rest, if you please, Robert; and as to your dislike of your father's country, and your father's country-people, that I consider more your misfortune than your fault. If a colt is not properly trained he will aye be running over to the wrong side of the road; and it is the same with a lad. If he is brought up to hear nothing but folly and nonsense when he is a child, he will never be worth much all his life long.'

'Say what you please against me, sir; but do not, even by im-

plication, speak against your dead wife. I know what she had to bear; I know how you broke her heart—'

'Just hide a wee,' interposed Mr. McCullagh, 'and don't, in your temper, speak words you may wish to-morrow you had never spoken. One story is good till another is told. There is not a judge in the land would give his opinion till he had heard the defendant's case. As we have somehow got upon the subject—sorely against my will—I'll tell you this: that there never was a husband willing to do more for his wife than I for your mother. If she spoke the truth on her dying bed, she could not say I ever was aught but good to her. She tried me sore, I won't deny that; and I would not let her ruin me; if she had had her way we'd have been begging our bread within a year of our marriage. I never thought to say this much to you; but when you imply I am unfair to you because your mother was unfair to me, I can hold my peace no longer. Ye know, Robert, the beginning and end why we have never just agreed. Ye know ye have always and ever set yourself up against me. When ye were quite a small child—'

'O sir, don't let us talk of that now!'

'I must talk of it, Robert, for ye began the fray. Ye remember what ye were brought up to think of your father, who should have been first in your thoughts. I say that seriously. A child may love his mother most, there's nothing to advance against that, for it's nature, perhaps; but his mother should teach him to respect his father. The man should be head of his own household.'

'Is it necessary, father, for us to go over all that old ground?' asked his son.

'Yes; for the reason you and I have never travelled it before. Always and ever there has been a hidden reference to some wrong your mother suffered at my hands; and God knows the only wrong I ever did her was saying, "Will ye be my wife?" We were not suited, Robert. Her ways were not mine, or mine hers; and yet, do you know,' said Mr. McCullagh, with a dash of poetry and sentiment which seemed quite foreign to his nature, 'if she had been a bit gentle and lamb-like, if she had not angered me with her senseless mockings and jeerings, I think I might have been a different person. I have seen women just fit to make of a man what they liked. Your mother, Robert, did not see fit to make anything of me.'

'I would rather not speak of her,' his son said stiffly.

'It was you introduced her name. Just when your mother and I were at what I may call our worst, I heard one man say to his fellow, "Why do you thrash that poor brute of a horse as you do? It makes me sick to see you." And the other made answer, "Because he is the greatest devil ever drew breath." "That's your version of it," said the first. "*I should like to hear the horse's side of the story.*" Now that is what I mean: there was another side to the story, and that was mine. I refused many of her wishes just for the same reason I refuse your demand for seven thousand pounds,—because there was no reason in them.'

'But surely, sir, you can see some reason in my desire to obtain a partnership in Pousnetts?'

'And pay seven thousand pounds for the preevilege?'

'Seven thousand pounds seems nothing to them.'

'Do you know what I started with?'

'A very small sum, I believe, sir.'

'Something like seven shillings, Robert, when I first found myself adrift in your big world of London.'

'But the times were different then.'

'I think they were a trifle harder.'

'You will acknowledge that a man who has to make his way with a good coat on his back must fight a harder battle than the man who wages the battle of life in his shirt-sleeves.'

'Perhaps so; but my coat was good enough, and I did not insult my first employer by entering his office in my shirt-sleeves.'

There was silence for a minute; then the younger man said desperately,

'To put it in plain words, sir, will you help me in this matter?'

'To put it in plain words,' answered Mr. McCullagh, 'I don't see how I can.'

'Of course I did not mean exactly in money,' this with all his feelers out.

'How then?' this doggedly.

'Why, your name, sir, would be quite sufficient.'

'Don't you know,' asked Mr. McCullagh, 'that in my business I neither give nor take a bill? You may sneer,' for indeed at that moment Robert did uplift nose and chin with a significant gesture; 'but my notion is that bills are the Satan of trade. They lure a man to destruction. He promises to pay, say, 200*l.* three months after date. How, on the face of God Almighty's earth, can a man promise to pay anything three months hence! To-day is his, but to-morrow is not.'

'Then, sir, you would stop all trade.'

'No, I'd stop all illegitimate trade. What I said at first to my folks was this, "I'll pay ye when I can;" and I did. There was no call for me to lie awake at nights thinking the fourth of the month was coming close; and the plan I adopted then I stick to now. Since I began no one has lost a sixpence by me, and I have not lost much myself.'

'Then, to cut this matter of mine short,' said Robert impatiently, 'you distinctly refuse to help me in any way?'

'I distinctly refuse to help you in this way,' answered his father in his broadest Scotch accent, which always grew painfully pronounced when he was very much in earnest. 'Knowing my principles, I really wonder at your coming to me on such an errand.'

'So do I—now,' muttered his son.

'Ye haven't asked me for my opinion,' went on Mr. McCullagh, his shrewd face looking shrewder and thinner than ever by the dim light of that solitary candle; 'but I'll give it ye, because I could not just reconcile it to my conscience to refrain from telling ye how this offer strikes me. As you very truly say, seven thousand pounds is nothing, or should be nothing, to a firm like Pousnetts. If they had bid ye bring in twenty-five or thirty thousand I should not have made a bit of wonder of the matter; but seven! Why, they must turn as much as that often in a day!'

'More,' agreed Robert.

'Well, then, if they're solvent—'

'Sir!' interrupted the younger man.

'I would not fire up about nothing if I was you. I am only putting a supposititious case. I don't say they are not sol-

vent. All I do mean is, if they are, seven thousand pounds can't signify to them, and therefore it is not for the worth's sake they insist on your finding it.'

'I told you before the value of the money had nothing to do with the question.'

'But,' proceeded Mr. McCullagh, as if his son had not spoken, 'if, on the other hand, they really want ye to stop, or, to put it in other words,' amended the merchant, checking his utterances off slowly with the first finger of his right hand, carefully striking the first finger of his left, 'if ye're of as much use to them as ye've always thought, and, indeed, as I have always understood myself, what is there to hinder them taking ye in without any capital at all? It's simple folly and nonsense talking about binding your interests to theirs. Sensible business men would not talk such babbles unless there was something behind.'

'And may I ask,' inquired

(To be continued.)

Robert sarcastically, 'if you do not believe one of the largest and oldest firms in our trade to be on the eve of bankruptcy, what you may be pleased to consider does lie behind?'

'I think they want civilly to get rid of ye,' and, feeling he could add nothing to the force of this unexpected statement, Mr. McCullagh rose and lifted the candle, as a sign the interview might be considered at an end.

But his son was not to be so dismissed.

'You never were more mistaken in your life, sir,' he said indignantly. 'I am invaluable to the firm. Mr. Pousnett acknowledges that himself.'

'I am real glad to know it,' was the dry comment; 'for, in that case, they'll give you a small share without any money whatsoever. The whole matter lies in a nutshell: if they are insolvent, the seven thousand pounds would be useful to them; if they are solvent and want you, they'll take ye and not look for a penny of capital.'

RETOUR.

THE long night still, and the measured beat
On the dark high-road of our horses' feet ;
But the violet deep of the sky grows pale,
And the world is beginning to lift her veil.
Let it come soon now, let the day begin !—
No joy like this in my life before,—
When the first full light of the sun streams in,
My heart will have come to its home once more.
One long light streak flushing faintly fair,
One pale-red line overslants the sky ;
There is such fresh life in the clear sharp air,
And I feel that the end of my dream is nigh.
I know each shape of those shadowy hills,
Remembered yet out of childhood's years ;
And each dim line of the landscape fills
My soul with a joy that is hard on tears.
For those are the Alban hills ; and there,
On the edge of the far horizon-line,
Is that Soracte, that stands out clear
Where the night hangs yet, and the last stars shine ?
And there is the arch of an aqueduct,
And those are ruins I see. I know
The circus-walls where I played and plucked
The violets thirteen years ago.
Do you see how the tall canes glimmer and shake,
Down by that tomb in the dear brown grass ?
I would die to have lived for this one day's sake ;
Night, come back late, so it may not pass !
And the light grows strong in the Eastern skies ;
Why are the walls at our side so high ?
What do they hide from our waiting eyes ?
But the road turns round, and we pass them by.
Dim in the mist and the morning haze,
The towers rise on a battled wall ;
While the sun comes up in a yellow blaze,
And one blue dome looms over them all.
Let me not go mad—they have brought me home ;
This is the day-dawn, and here is Rome !

R. R.

HOW WE LOST A TREASURE.

TEN years ago I was churchwarden, or trustee, or something of the sort (I could never quite make out my exact legal status), of the English church in a well-known French seaside town. In this capacity I became involved in a very strange affair, which, though anything but entertaining at the time, has at least provided me with one 'good story' drawn from personal experience.

Fêteville, if I may so name the town in which my lot was cast, is by no means one of those brand-new watering-places which have sprung up on the French coast during the last thirty years. It is a place of great antiquity, whose name is continually met in the history of mediæval France; and is, I may add, eminently unfashionable, though much frequented by the Briton whose ideas of a visit to the Continent are mild and limited.

In the eighteenth century, before the idea of travelling for pleasure had entered the middle-class English mind, Fêteville was, I suppose, very like any other French provincial town. It therefore rejoiced in old ramparts, a cathedral, and (what is more to the point) several monasteries and convents. With one of the former my story is, strange to say, connected; and I must make a few introductory remarks concerning it, that the whole of my own adventure may be comprehensible.

In the year 1789 the Capuchin fathers were established in Fêteville in the steep Rue des Viellards. They were in a flourishing con-

dition, and are, moreover, said to have possessed some extraordinarily fine church-plate. There was a very considerable quantity of it, the accumulations of five centuries of pious donors, including many valuable offerings to the shrine of 'St. Ambrose of Fêteville,' a local saint who had flourished in the fourteenth century. Now one fine day in 1791 the poor fathers shared the fate of their brethren in other parts of France, and were driven out without a moment's notice by a rabid and ragged mob, who were no doubt stimulated by Republican enthusiasm, and not by a vision of the ~~fine~~ pickings to be had inside the chapel. However, the reverend fathers' movable property did not follow them, but somehow appeared in the houses of various poor but virtuous citizens. Be it observed, however, that while carved chests and stools were rife in the back streets, and though something which bore a resemblance to a handsome but mutilated confessional-box was to be found affording shelter to a tribe of hens in one retired quarter, yet no one could be found who would own to having secured any plate beyond a few paltry silver ornaments of small size. The conclusion arrived at by the public was, that some particularly cool hand had been the first to discover the strong-box, and was keeping quiet, to avoid any unpleasant investigations that might be made when a settled government should be in power.

I have forgotten to mention

that on the night after the monastery was pillaged some especially excited patriot, wishing to free the town from the taint of having harboured such an 'abomination' as a body of friars, set fire to the place, which was burnt almost to the ground, with the exception of its chapel. Of this only the shell was left; however, after a short time, it was fitted with a new roof, and was utilised as a cask warehouse by an enterprising cooper, who had somehow obtained a grant of it. The place where the other buildings had stood, and the little garden of the monastery, were soon covered by a hive of small houses.

Now the strange story which I am about to relate seems to make it probable that the monks' hoard was never discovered at all at the time of the Revolution. If so, it may be asked why, when settled times came again, the fathers made no effort to recover their lost property. To this I can only answer that several of them are said to have been so maltreated as not to survive the pillage, and that among these may have been all the individuals intrusted with the secret of the hiding-place of their treasure.

After the great French wars of the early part of this century were over, the town of which I am writing, being close to England, became greatly frequented by our countrymen. Among the various wants of the expatriated Briton a church was found to have a place; and when a suitable situation was being sought, it chanced that the old chapel, now a cask warehouse, was chosen, as being cheap, and requiring only a few repairs and additions to make it all that was needed. For as funds were not plentiful, it was a desideratum to escape the expense of erecting a new building. Now of this church,

in the year 1869, it happened that I was a churchwarden, and thereby met with this curious experience.

It was a very nice place, that town by the sea, and no doubt is still; but I have not shown my face in it these ten years on account of this wretched affair. Then, however, there was no place that I liked better, though I must acknowledge that it was a little dull and melancholy in the winter. But with that season my tale has no concern, as it opens on a certain evening, or rather night, in June.

The hour of eleven had just struck by the weak-toned clock of the Custom-house, and I was seated at the end of the long pier. The waves were leaping and heaving outside the breakwater, and showing their white crests in the bright moonlight; exulting no doubt at the way in which they had tormented the late London boat, which had just emptied out its ghastly freight of passengers. I had been amused at the state those unpleasant-looking Britons were in after their rough passage, and especially at the oburgations of one individual, who appeared to have staved off the qualms of sea-sickness by copious libations of brandy, and, after refusing to allow the *douaniers* to overhaul his luggage, had attempted to rescue it from them *vi et armis*, whence there seemed to be every probability of his spending his first night abroad in a French lock-up.

When the bustle was over, I had sauntered down to the end of the pier, and had seated myself there. I do not know why I lingered; but I liked the cool night breeze, and it slowly lulled me to sleep. I was awakened by a step near me; and as, with a shudder and an instinctive move-

ment to feel that my watch was safe, I recovered my sight, I found that a stranger must have passed very close in front of me. I stared after him, and was surprised to see him turn and walk back till he stood before me.

'Pardon me, Herr Lamb.'

(Solomon Lamb is my name.)

'Hallo,' said I, 'how do you know who I am?'

'O meinheer, I have walked up and down before you two or three times, and I am sure I am not wrong in thinking that you are the gentleman who was so kind to me at Aachen. Do you not remember the carpenter who repaired your travelling-desk, which had been broken by the carelessness of the porter at the hotel, and to whom you gave some other little jobs during your stay? Perhaps you will remember my name, Carl Muller.'

'O yes,' I replied, brightening up more and more, 'I remember. But what are you doing here?'

'Well, sir, it's a long story, but I have been forced to leave Germany through being persecuted by the Government. I know a little of most trades, and I have a knowledge of mining, my people belonging to the Hartz. I also had a specialty for finding lost and buried treasure, and three times discovered valuable hoards for the authorities; but instead of it doing me any good, I only became a suspected character, and it ended by my having to fly with hardly a groschen to help myself with. I have been tramping all through Belgium, and now I have wandered into France, looking out for work.'

'I am afraid,' I said, 'that you will not find any treasure here; it is not at all a likely place for that.'

'No,' he answered; 'but I am a good carpenter, and know some-

thing of boat-building. I therefore came here after trying Calais and Dunkerque, and have been inquiring for employment at the different building-yards, but as yet I have not been successful. Perhaps, as I have had the good fortune of meeting you, you may be able to help me to get work.'

A happy thought struck me. I owned a boat which my boys sailed about in; it wanted a deck in the bows; here was a man who would do the work cheaper and sooner than the dilatory workmen of Fêteviller.

'Well,' said I, 'I think I can help you to a small job; so if you come up to my house on the esplanade to-morrow morning we will talk it over. It will be about doing up a boat.'

The man seemed very thankful, bowed, and then walked away. I told my wife when I reached home of my meeting Muller, and how strange it was that he knew me, and said what I had promised in the way of work.

'I know he is a clever fellow, and I want to see what he can do with the boat; if he is a good carpenter he may be of great use, especially as these Fêteviller people are so very independent. But I do not quite understand that rigmarole about his reason for leaving Germany.'

Muller came in the morning, very punctually at the hour I had named to him. I walked with him down to the basin, showed him what I wanted done, and advanced him a few francs, as he said he was penniless.

In a day or two the results of his work made it apparent that he was very skilful, and both my boys and myself were delighted at his handiness. I found him one or two other small jobs, and also recommended him to several of my friends. Among these was

Mr. Dawkins, our parson, and it struck him that Muller would be the very man to do some repairs that were needed about the church cheaply and well.

He finished this work also—did everything so cleverly, and made himself so generally useful, that at last he was installed in a couple of rooms close to the church, and acted as a sort of decorator, verger, and, in fact, Jack-of-all-trades.

In a few months Muller's appearance improved wonderfully; a wife and child, of whom he had told us nothing, joined him from Germany. He bought some furniture, and, being a general favourite, seemed in a fair way to secure a respectable living. He appeared very devoted to his family, was quite sober, and very seldom left his house, except to look after the interior of the church, which seemed to have some great charm for him.

He was a Protestant, of course, and appeared to be such a thorough Christian, that the clergyman and all the devout old ladies of the congregation took quite an interest in him and his wife. When he took to holding the plate at the door on Sundays, in a full suit of black and a white tie, everybody was quite melted, if I may use the expression. As a finish to his excellences, he suggested two or three ornamental improvements to the pulpit, did some very pretty carvings for the altar-rails, and repainted the table of Commandments under the east window not at all badly. This work kept him about the church all day for some weeks.

In July 1870 I wanted some repairs done to the mast of my boat, which had been slightly sprung, so went to Muller's early in the morning to ask his advice and assistance. I knocked at the

door, but no one answered. I called through the keyhole for Mrs. Muller. As no one came, I tried to look in at one of the windows. At last I banged at the door with my heel till I nearly forced it in; still nobody stirred.

'Very strange this,' I thought; 'I'll go and ask the parson whether he knows anything about it.' I walked off at a tremendous pace to Mr. Dawkins's house, knocked, and was admitted, and went straight after the servant into the breakfast-room.

I fear that without saying 'Good-morning' to Mrs. Dawkins, who was just pouring out the tea for breakfast, I began by blurting out, 'Where's Muller?'

'Muller?' said Mr. Dawkins, taking off his spectacles and looking at me in great surprise; 'I suppose he is at his house.'

'No,' I replied; 'or if he is, he is dead, and his wife too. He's gone.'

'What!' said Mr. Dawkins, nearly upsetting his tea-cup. 'What do you say?'

'O, I mean he's bolted—gone off.'

Visions of francs advanced for the repairs and alterations must have crossed Mr. Dawkins's mental disc; but he evidently could not easily believe anything wrong of Muller. He got up hastily, and, with a slight tremor in his voice, said,

'I think we had better go down again to his house and see.'

We went as fast as we could walk, and hammered at the door again, but could get no response. Then I suggested that we should send for a locksmith, and get the door opened.

This was soon done, and behold! there were the rooms exactly as they used to be, but not a soul in them. None of the furniture had been removed, and the

plates and crumbs of the last meal were still on the kitchen-table. The clothes-press in the bedroom, however, was empty and open.

Mr. Dawkins and I looked at each other, but could not guess in the least what had become of Muller and his family. We then tried the neighbours for information, and ascertained from an old washer-woman, who lived two doors off, that she had seen Muller leave in Jean Dubois' cart at daybreak that very morning. 'And a nice lot of boxes he had with him. They seemed so heavy that he and Dubois could hardly lift them into the cart.'

'Boxes?' remarked Mr. Dawkins inquiringly.

'Yes, boxes of good white deal, four of them, all with the sides bound with iron clamps.'

'And do you know where Madame Muller is?' I asked.

'O yes; she told Madame Chevert yesterday that she was going off in the morning by train to Dunkerque, to meet her mother, who was coming from Germany; and she took the child with her.'

The old woman directed us to the carter's house, to which we at once walked, and found that he had started very early that morning with some boxes for Mr. Muller. He had gone by the Calais road, and would not be back till the evening, or perhaps not till next morning. Here was a nice state of things! Muller had evidently absconded, and we could not find out anything about him till the carter returned.

But the puzzle was, where did the heavy boxes come from? I had an inward consciousness that something serious had happened, but what it was I had not the least idea.

Mr. Dawkins suggested that we should go and see if the interior of the church was all right. We

found everything there as usual. Then we began to look about in an objectless sort of way, to see if we could find any traces of the lost one; and at last, looking into the shed built against our boundary wall, where we kept the coals for heating the church in winter, I saw a large quantity of freshly-dug earth.

This seemed strange, and going in I stumbled over a heavy board, which was thus slightly displaced, and revealed part of a hole. I lifted the board away, and saw a neatly-cut circular opening, but how deep I could not tell. I called Mr. Dawkins, and, tying a piece of string which was in my pocket to his walking-stick, we felt for the bottom, but failed to find it.

'We must get some one to go down and see what this means,' said I; 'it strikes me that there may be a passage through this hole leading under the church.'

'That is not at all improbable,' said Mr. Dawkins; 'and now I come to think of it, Muller spoke to me rather mysteriously a few weeks ago of his having an idea that there must be a crypt under here, and that some day it might be found out.'

'Shall we put this into the hands of the authorities, Mr. Dawkins?' I asked.

Mr. Dawkins, however, thought that we had better wait for the return of the carrier, and see if there was anything in the hole. 'For if there is anything wrong, and we call in the police, we may be involved in a lot of trouble before the business is over.'

Accordingly we agreed to conduct our exploration ourselves, and to meet again at the church after lunch, with candles and a rope, and a few tools. I was too excited myself to make much of a meal, and was waiting at the

church long before two o'clock, with a couple of lanterns and a packet of candles. A few minutes after, Mr. Dawkins appeared, and with him his eldest son, a light active boy of fifteen. They had brought with them a coil of rope.

Our first act was to let a lantern down the hole. We could then see that it had been made by an experienced workman, as we found that at a depth of a few feet it was carefully shored up with short pieces of timber. We could soon see the bottom, at a great depth. We then pulled the lantern up, and let down young Dawkins, who was in high glee at the prospect of an adventure. After some ten or eleven feet of rope had passed through our hands, he cried, 'Stop! I have reached the bottom.' We then gave him the lantern, and asked what the place was like. He answered that there was plenty of room to turn about in, and that the hole was continued in a horizontal direction towards the church. At this I became thoroughly excited, stripped off my coat, and lighted the other lantern, and then got Mr. Dawkins to lower me. Down I went, and looked about me.

The tunnel, leading towards the church, was regularly supported at intervals with side posts and cross pieces of wood, and was big enough to allow a man to crawl on his hands and knees very comfortably. As there seemed no great difficulty in the matter, I shouted up to Mr. Dawkins,

'We are going up the passage; you had better go into the church, and if you hear a knocking, you will know that we are below.'

The wall of the church was only some twenty-five feet from the coal-shed; we soon penetrated to that distance, and young Dawkins, who preceded me, said,

'We have come to a hole in a wall; and the ground seems lower on the other side.'

After lowering his lantern he found that there was a fall of about three feet, down which he stepped. I followed, and holding up our lanterns we stood upright. We were in an angle of a stone-built chamber, evidently a portion of the crypt of the old monastery, whose existence had never been suspected. The open space in which we stood was some twenty feet square; two of its sides were formed of old stone walls, the other two of heaps of rubbish, reaching quite up to the low arched roof.

Looking carefully around, traces of Muller's handiwork were to be seen everywhere: here was a passage tunnelled through the rubbish; there a wall bored through, and the bones of several skeletons proved that he had disinterred some bodies in his search. One stone coffin lay in a corner, with its lid off; within was the skeleton of its tenant, quite perfect, with a leaden crucifix resting against the ribs.

After deliberating a little we determined to examine the largest of three openings into the rubbish, as it showed signs of having been well trodden down, and was of a good size. We followed it for some little distance, and again emerged into the open crypt.

Almost the first thing that we noticed was a small iron door, half eaten away with rust. It had been taken off its hinges and lay at our feet. In the wall opposite was a small massively built recess. And now it was that we found evidence of the success of Muller's search, for on the floor of the recess was a quantity of old and rotten wood, some of it still joined together with rusty clamps. It was evidently

the remains of several large and strong chests, while the look of the place at once led to the idea that we had come upon the treasure-chamber of the monks.

It was evidently useless to attempt any more exploration, and we now only thought of communicating with Mr. Dawkins. We knocked against the roof with one of the pieces of wood which was lying about, without receiving any response. Then we returned to the first chamber, and, after several attempts, succeeded in getting an answer from above. On trying to ascertain its whereabouts, we were guided to a place where I fancied I saw a stone, in the roof which seemed loose. On looking more closely I perceived a chink at its edge, through which I thought I could see a dim light. I dragged a large stone from the rubbish, and placed it beneath this spot. I could then easily touch the roof, about a foot above my head. I cried up through the chink,

'Can you hear me, Mr. Dawkins?'

I then heard his answer quite plainly,

'Yes, I can.'

'Then help me to lift this stone when you see it move.'

I pushed with all my force against one side of the flag, which moved upwards without much trouble. Mr. Dawkins put his hands below as it was lifted, and by turning it over we made an opening some three feet by two, which let a flood of light into the old crypt.

With the help of a pull from above, I emerged from my subterranean excursion, and found myself in the northern aisle of the church. I was in a dreadful state, dripping with perspiration, my hair covered with earth and brickdust, both my braces burst, my trousers gone at the knees, and showing hardly a vestige of

their original black. Altogether, I must have appeared a very remarkable specimen of an elderly and respectable citizen with a comfortable income and five children.

We then hauled up my assistant, who was glad enough to go and cool himself in the courtyard. When he was outside I sat down in a pew, to the detriment, I fear, of its cushion, wiped my forehead, took a little of the dust out of my eyes, and uttered a long 'phew!' I looked at Mr. Dawkins; he looked back at me, shook his head, drew up his eyebrows, and, with a long-drawn sigh, said,

'Well, Mr. Lamb?'

'It's anything but well,' I replied; and proceeded to give him a jerky and disjointed account of our exploration. I ended with: 'So, you see, there have been nice goings on in the crypt; and I say, suppose, for the sake of argument—'

'Suppose what?' asked Mr. Dawkins.

'Muller—the boxes—ahem! any amount of treasure—who is responsible?'

'O, of course, you and Mr. Blinker, as joint trustees.'

'Are we?' said I, firing up. 'And how about *your* share, Mr. Dawkins?'

There was an awkward pause.

'I think we had better not say any more about it till we have seen Dubois; there may still be some mistake about the boxes. And now I think we have kept James waiting long enough.'

He called his son in, and cautioned him against saying a word about our exploration. We then replaced the stone, which fitted perfectly, and adjourned to the vestry. After a lengthy course of brushing and wiping, James and I appeared in something more

like our natural condition. We carefully locked the church and the coal-shed, and proceeded to our respective dwellings. I slunk home by back streets, in a dreadful state of mind lest any of my acquaintances should see me in my present disreputable state. However, I was lucky enough to meet no one on the way; but I shall not soon forget the horrified face of our maid Justine when she opened the door for me. I muttered something to her about having met with a slight accident, and ran up to my bedroom, where I changed my clothes and made myself generally presentable. Mrs. Lamb was out, so I had not to account for my condition to her; and I determined not to speak of the matter till I had seen the carrier. After dinner, and again at half-past ten at night, I went and inquired at his house, but not even at the latter hour were Dubois and his cart forthcoming. As I turned away the second time I met Mr. Dawkins coming on the same errand. We both agreed that there was nothing to be done but to go to bed and wait till the next morning.

Accordingly, after a restless night and a hurried breakfast, I walked to Mr. Dawkins's house, and we both set off to look up the carrier. We found that he had just returned, and his wife was warming some coffee for him.

'Good-morning, M. Dubois,' said Mr. Dawkins.

'Good-morning.'

'You have just returned from Calais, I believe?'

'Yes, monsieur. I started at daybreak and have just got back.'

'You took Carl Muller there, I believe?'

'Yes, and a tough job I had up the hills. Mon Dieu, but those boxes were heavy!'

I glanced at Mr. Dawkins, and

saw that, like myself, he was getting excited. However, calming himself, he said carelessly,

'Boxes!'

'Yes, monsieur, boxes; four of them, bound with iron, besides an old trunk. They must have weighed some hundred and fifty kilos each. Muller said that he was taking them to Calais for a Monsieur Lamb.'

I dared not look at Mr. Dawkins, and I gradually felt my face grow hotter and hotter.

'You said Calais?' I asked.

'Yes. We got there about noon, and I left them for him at an inn in the outskirts called the *Trois Pêcheurs*. I had some acquaintance whom I wished to see in Calais; so I stayed the night in town, and started for home before daybreak this morning.'

'Thank you,' said I, looking at Mr. Dawkins to see if he had any more questions to ask. 'Good-morning.'

'Now then,' said Mr. Dawkins, when we were outside of the house, 'we must be off to Calais at once, that's plain.'

'Yes,' said I. 'But if this villain has been telling everybody that he was taking the boxes away for me, what a scrape I shall be in if the authorities once get hold of the idea of treasure! Well, we have missed the ten-o'clock train, so we must wait till midday. We had better go home and tell our wives, and explain why we must be absent.'

Mr. Dawkins assented, and we agreed to meet at the railway-station a quarter of an hour before the train was to start.

I shall not dilate on the scene between Mrs. Lamb and myself when I told her all that had happened. Let it suffice to say that up to that hour I had a lingering belief in womanly sympathy and forbearance as exemplified in that

lady. Now, however, that belief has passed away, never to return.

After telling her my story in the most interesting, not to say pathetic, way, drawing pictures of the French Government seizing me for having made away with buried treasure, and, after confiscating my property, sending me to drag out a miserable existence in New Caledonia—after all this the sympathy I got was:

‘Well, Lamb, you are a bigger donkey than I ever took you for.’

Bigger, mind you. There was the sting. She must, then, always have taken me for somewhat of a donkey.

‘Yes, bigger donkey, for trusting a nasty deceiving German of whom you knew nothing, and becoming churchwarden, and all that nonsense!’

‘Silence, woman!’ I shouted, in my grandest tones.

Without a word more I seized my hat, crammed it on my head, grasped my stick, and, without waiting for anything to eat or drink (I knew that we were to have cold mutton for lunch that day), rushed down to Michaud’s, the *restaurateur*, ate a hurried morsel (which, I must say, was beautifully cooked), and reached the station ten minutes before Mr. Dawkins.

When we arrived at Calais we took a fly and drove at once to the Trois Pêcheurs. We stepped into the little sanded public room, and by making inquiries of the landlady, a neat and very talkative little woman, we soon learned all there was to know about Muller.

He had arrived with the cart and boxes, and, after seeing them safely deposited, went out and hired another vehicle to take them on to Dunkerque. He said that he was taking charge of them for an English gentleman called Monsieur Lamb, who lived at Fêteville.

I tried to look as if I were not that miserable individual; and after thanking the hostess, and accounting for our inquiries by saying that we had been requested to find out whether he had reached Calais safely, we asked if she knew the driver of the cart which had taken the boxes on to Dunkerque.

She said that she had not noticed the man particularly; but that if we could wait a few minutes she would find out who he was. But after a short delay she returned, and told us that none of her household knew the man. All that they remembered was that he was fair, talked with a foreign accent, and had a cart which was not of the local build. They had supposed him to be a Fleming from beyond Dunkerque, but he might have been a German.

This was the last trace of Muller that we ever discovered. Mr. Dawkins and myself both agreed that the man with the cart was probably an accomplice, and must have come with his conveyance across the Belgian frontier. Still he may possibly have been a mere ignorant instrument. The reason for Muller’s choosing such a way of getting the boxes out of France was plain. If he had gone by rail the boxes would have attracted attention, and would besides have been examined by the *douaniers* at Lille or Blandain. Moreover his destination would have been divulged by the labels of the boxes, and he would have run the risk of being stopped by telegraph. Going, as he did, by road, he escaped all immediate pursuit; indeed, he may have calculated on a longer start than he had, as his absence was only discovered soon after his departure, owing to the accident of my wishing to speak to him early in the morning. Besides, if he had not been

noticed in company with Dubois at daybreak it would have been a much more lengthy business to discover traces of his flight.

Mr. Dawkins and I had a gloomy journey back to Fêteville; and the more I pondered on my responsibility, the less I liked it. If Dubois once got speaking of Muller's boxes and my inquiries, and the people who lived round the church connected them with our mysterious manœuvres in the courtyard with ropes and lanterns, I should certainly, and Mr. Dawkins possibly, be arrested for making away with the treasure. To prove my innocence would not be very easy. I should, even when I had proved it, always be a marked man in Fêteville, and should never hear the end of jokes and taunts for the undignified part I had played in the matter.

When I arrived home I found Mrs. Lamb in a different mood. She was no longer flippant and insulting, but remained equally aggravating in another way. 'I should be the ruin of my wife and children,' she never should be able to hold up her head in Fêteville again,' &c., *ad infinitum*. This was awful; nor was my state of mind improved when, on going to fill up the hole in the coal-shed next morning, I perceived that all my motions were watched by a small, but intensely interested, crowd of the neighbours. This decided me: I went off to Mr. Dawkins immediately, and asked whether he would object very much to my leaving Fêteville. I was rather surprised at the alacrity with which he received my proposal; but I have since come to the conclusion that he thought if I, who had introduced Muller to the place, and whose name that wretch had employed in his stories to the carrier and the people at

Calais, were to leave the town, all the suspicion would fall on me, and he himself would escape notice.

My steps for departure were soon taken. I occupied a furnished house, so there was no difficulty about heavy luggage. That afternoon I spent in paying the bills I owed about the town, while my wife was packing all our possessions in our trunks, and in two or three boxes which I purchased for the purpose. I paid our servants some francs more than their wages, left Mr. Dawkins a parcel containing my quarter's rent in five-franc notes, to be delivered to my landlord next day, and so was enabled to start by the Folkestone boat that evening.

It was on the very next day that the war between France and Germany was declared, and I suppose the authorities at Fêteville found some other way of employing their time than in making inquiries for my unfortunate self. At any rate, Mr. Dawkins wrote that he never heard of any being made. However, I have taken care not to visit Fêteville since; for the main facts of my story soon became known to all the English residing there at that period, and I had no wish to be reminded of them.

The thing which has always been a mystery to me is how Muller came to dig for that treasure. Of course I do not believe a word of the story he told me about his 'having a specialty for finding lost and buried treasure,' that is absurd. But what can possibly have led him to commence his explorations below the church? It is possible, of course, that he heard the flooring of the place sound hollow, or from some other similar reason conjectured that there was a crypt below; or

he may have inferred its existence merely because the church had once been an old monastic chapel. Commencing to explore from mere curiosity, he may have ended by discovering the recess with the iron door and its contents. This is possible ; but I often think that it can hardly have been chance that brought him to Fêteville, and threw him in the way of one of the few people who could introduce him to the church. Assuming, however, that it was not chance, I cannot make any probable conjecture as to his having acquired any information about the place. It is in the highest degree unlikely that some of the old Capuchins, who were expelled at the time of the Revolution, left some memorandum about the hoard, which

finally fell into Muller's hands. But in what other way he can have known of it I cannot guess. I presume that I am not likely to meet Muller again, so the puzzle will never receive its solution.

One thing, however, I can solemnly affirm—namely, that if ever you catch me becoming a churchwarden again in a church built over an old monastery in a French town, you may 'write me down an ass.'

I trust Mr. Dawkins will pardon the revelation of our little adventure of ten years ago, if this story ever falls into his hands ; for I must assure the public that, though I have changed names and a few circumstances, all the main points of this tale are actually founded on fact. o.

FORTUNES MADE. IN BUSINESS.

XXI.

MESSRS. BASS AND THE BURTON BREWERIES.

It is no extravagant assertion to say that throughout the world there is no name more familiar than that of Bass. A household word amongst Englishmen, it is one of the first words in the vocabulary of foreigners whose knowledge of the English language is of the most rudimentary description. And while the cognomen of the great Burton brewer is of cosmopolitan celebrity, there is no geometrical figure so well known as the vermilion triangle which is the trade-mark on his bottles. It is as familiar to the eye as her Majesty's visage on the postage-stamps. It would, indeed, be a difficult task to say in what part of the earth that vivid triangle does not gladden the heart of man. Thackeray contended with great humour that far as the meteor flag of England may have carried the glory of this country, the fame of her bitter beer has gone farther still. The word 'Bass' is known in places where such 'names to conjure with' as Beaconsfield, Gladstone, Bright, Tennyson, and Dickens would be unintelligible sounds. To what corner of the habitable world has not 'Bass' penetrated? He has circumnavigated the world more completely than Captain Cook. The sign of the vermilion triangle is sure evidence of civilisation. That trade-mark has travelled 'from China to Peru,' 'from Greenland's icy mountains to

India's coral strand.' There it is in Paris or St. Petersburg, Madrid or Moscow, Berlin or Bombay, Brussels or Baalbec, New York or Yokohama, San Francisco or San Stefano, Teheran or Trichinopoly. You meet the refreshing label up among Alpine glaciers and down in the *cafés* of the Bosphorus, among the gondolas of the Grand Canal at Venice, the dahabeahs at the first cataract on the Nile, and the junks of China. It has reached 'the Great Lone Land.' It has refreshed the 'mighty hunter' camping out in Wyoming, Montana, or Dakotah. It sparkles before the camp-fire of the Anglo-Saxon adventurer out in the wilds of the Far West, and its happy aroma is grateful to the settler in the Australian bush. When the North Pole is discovered, 'Bass' will be found there, cool and delicious.

Mr. George Augustus Sala, writing recently of *Paris Herself Again*, insists that the French people are rapidly becoming a nation of English beer-drinkers. He says: 'Bavarian beer, for political reasons, they resolutely refuse to drink; and similar causes render them averse from partaking of the once-beloved beverage of Strasbourg. Their own beer, from Nancy and other parts of the east of France, is very bad; and I hold that Burton-on-Trent has a very bright future before it, and, so far as supplying the French mar-

ket is concerned, might eventually beat Vienna—great as has been the name of Dreher—out of the field. “Cerevisia de Palyaly,” as the Spaniards call Bass’s pale ale, is making great way in all the towns of Andalusia, and all the first-rate *cafés* in Paris sell Allsopp, either bottled or on draught.’

In countries where wine is cheap and ‘Bass’ dear, ‘Bass’ is preferred; and if in England ‘Bass’ were the price of ‘Heidsieck,’ ‘Mumm,’ or ‘Moët & Chandon,’ and these the price of ‘Bass,’ then the Burton beer would prevail over the champagne. Farquhar, in the *Beaux’ Stratagem*, makes Boniface say, as he pours out a glass of his Burton beer, ‘Smooth as oil, sweet as milk, clear as amber, and strong as brandy:’ ‘fancy it Burgundy—only fancy it—and ’tis worth ten shillings a quart.’ Even a higher value was placed upon the wine of malt by the Oxford ‘Union,’ where it was once gravely deliberated which had conferred the greatest boon on the human race—the printing-press or Bass’s beer. The debate was conducted with great ability, and on the division taking place ‘Bass’ was triumphant. Beer is a truly national drink; ‘Git ma my aale,’ says Tennyson’s ‘Northern Farmer;’ and he only expresses the request of Englishmen everywhere. Give the Frenchman his *absinthe* and his *vin ordinaire*, the Dutchman his schnapps, the Spaniard his sugar-and-water, the Russian his *vodka*, the Oriental his sherbet and his coffee, the American his iced cobbles, but give the Englishman his beer. ‘To rob a working man of his beer’ is, in the eyes of the English artisan, an act of the deepest turpitude. A draught of ‘Bass’ is popularly supposed and currently believed to have saved the life of his Royal Highness the Prince of

Wales during the terrible crisis of that deadly fever when all the country watched with affectionate solicitude by his bedside; Dr. Tanner interested himself in ‘Bass’ as soon as he left off fasting and began feasting; beef and beer are somehow bound up with old England’s greatness, and are associated with the battle of Waterloo, the conquest of India, and the exploration of the world.

The beer-trade is a great industry, seeing that the number of brewers in the United Kingdom is registered at 22,278; but Mr. M. T. Bass stands at the top of it. Mr. Gladstone, in his Budget speech of June 10, 1880, addressing himself to the vexed question of the malt-tax, spoke of Mr. Bass as one who, ‘both from his ability and his long experience and skill in that branch of industry, stood at its head,’ and he alluded to the great brewery at Burton as ‘a permanent and respected institution of the country.’ It may, however, be remarked in parenthesis that the recent financial proposals of the Government have not altogether the countenance of the firm the Premier so pointedly eulogised; for Mr. Arthur Bass, M.P., presiding at the anniversary festival of the Licensed Victuallers’ School shortly afterwards, is reported to have said that he thought their result would be to make beer dearer, and to stimulate its manufacture from an inferior article. Mr. Gladstone at a subsequent date, in the discussion on the Customs and Inland Revenue Bill, said the beer trade had its high-priests and its hierarchy. Sir Wilfrid Lawson, therefore, with his customary facetiousness, christened the well-known member for Derby ‘Archbishop Bass.’

The history of Messrs. Bass & Co. as Burton brewers does not reach back much beyond a period

of a hundred years; but the fame of Burton ale is as ancient as the reputation of Sheffield steel, of which we read in Chaucer. The archæology of ale would make an interesting work; but to record all that antiquarians and historians and poets have said on the subject would demand the space occupied by Alison's *History of Europe*, or as many volumes as the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. The Egyptians are claimed as the originators of ale. Humorous cynicism has surmised that it was for the beer-pots as well as the flesh-pots of the Pharaohs that the parched Israelites sighed in the thirsty desert. We have not traced back Mr. Bass's genealogy, for he is a living reminiscence himself, a Nestor belonging to the last century, carrying his experience to the eighth decade of this century. But, remembering that the Egyptians were the inventors of beer, it has been assumed that the Burton brewer descended from Bassareus, the Egyptian god, to whom oblations of wine of barley were periodically offered. And in support of this natural supposition may be cited the Egyptian pyramid in red—the coat-of-arms worn by 'Bass' at the present day. Bringing the history of beer down to English annals, we find that the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes drank beer at their religious festivals, and it was provided at the banquets of their kings. 'Whitsun ales' are bound up with the ecclesiastical history of 'Merrie England.' At Haddon Hall, in the mighty mediæval days, beer formed one of the great hospitalities of the baronial castle; and in the wainscoting of the banqueting-hall to this day is to be observed by the curious the iron ring fixed there in the 'good old days' for the wrists of teetotalers, who were thus suspended while the potent

ale the abstainers abjured was poured down their sleeves. Burton beer figures early in our 'rough island story.' Ben Jonson sings the praises of Burton ale; while its panegyric by John Taylor, the Water-Poet, is one of the quaintest conceits in English composition. And while Shakespeare pronounces 'a quart of ale a dish fit for a king,' we find he puts in the 'fiery Hotspur's' mouth the opinion that the Burton district is the best in all England for a flagon of good beer, and makes Percy express his determination to keep it for himself, though he had to turn the Trent from its course to obtain it. It is plain, therefore, that the product of Burton was famous in Shakespeare's time; and we have historic evidence that Mary Queen of Scots was solaced in her solitary confinement at Tutbury Castle by draughts of Burton beer. Sir Walter Scott introduces the connection between Burton and beer in the pages of *Ivanhoe*; but the Staffordshire mash was celebrated before the time of Richard Cœur de Lion, for the Saxon kings built a bridge over the Trent at Burton, to give their subjects facilities to drink the beer of the place. Indeed, so liberally were these facilities employed, that in the twelfth century it was found necessary to raise the parapets of this bridge, in consequence of the frequent accidents that happened to people passing over it on their return journey. Old Dr. Plot, in his Staffordshire history, mentions Burton as the first and last place in which he had seen maltsters dry their barley in the sun in the open streets. What a revelation would meet the quaint gossiping writer's eyes could he but behold the Burton of to-day!

It was not, however, until the beginning of the eighteenth

century that brewing as a distinct trade was begun in Burton. The first common brewer was a Benjamin Printon. When he commenced the business he employed only three men. But he may be said to have founded the export trade of Burton. He sent out by wagons his barrels to distant towns. The fame of Burton beer spread. The demand for it induced new men to follow his enterprise. Among these was William Bass. He was a Burton carrier. Impressed with the increasing traffic in beer carried by his own teams, he determined to brew and transport his own brewings, instead of conveying those of other traders. This was in 1777. The honest old carrier's shrewd decision founded the largest and most famous firm in the world. William Bass was the grandfather of Michael Thomas Bass, the present head of the Burton business. London, however, only took a barrel or two in those days. It was sold at a hostelry in Gray's-inn-lane, called the Peacock. St. Petersburg was a great market for the Burton brewings long before the English metropolis. Orders from the Russian capital exceeded 600 hogsheads at a time; but they were for a strong dark liquid, quite unlike the present pale tonic for which Bass & Co. are celebrated. The St. Petersburg traffic taking precedence of that of London is accounted for by the expense of inland communication; while the Trent navigation gave direct access *via* Gainsborough to Hull, the English port for Baltic captains. The trade with Russia had grown to a large and important business when, in 1822, a despotic tariff imposed by the Czar's Government was so heavy as to be practically prohibitory.

At first sight, the imposition of these heavy import duties seemed to augur unfavourably for the future of Burton. On the other hand, they proved the foundation of Burton's fortune. Had they been repealed at the petition of the Burton brewers, Burton would probably have been a big village brewing the heavy heady dark Muscovite beverage to this day. But the action of Russia not only led to the popular introduction of Burton beer into London and the south of England, but to the establishment of that trade with the East, which marked an era of prosperity, the mercantile magnitude of which could not have been conceived by William Bass, even had he been endowed with an Oriental imagination, inspired by his own 'juice benignant.' The history of that important departure is worthy of recital.

At that period the whole of the Indian market was monopolised by one house, the London firm of Abbott & Hodgson, of the Old Bow Brewery. Hodgson's India pale ale had established itself in the East. India was dependent on Hodgson; but he had just then given offence to some of the East Indian merchants. About this time, Bass's beer had been introduced into London, and a gentleman in the East India Company's service suggested to Mr. Bass that he should brew a special beer for the Indian market: not the strong sweet brown ale synonymous with Burton; but a beer suited for consumption under a tropical sun. Mr. Bass tasted Hodgson's produce. He was of opinion that he could not only brew it, but that he could improve upon it. He brought practical determination to the question, and a series of scientific experiments

were entered upon. A beer had to be produced which should bear the atmospheric vicissitudes of a voyage round the Cape, and that should, when unloaded in India, be as clear as amber, sparkling as champagne, pleasant to the palate, and wholesome to the liver. Malt had to be dried a different colour, and the treatment of hops rose to quite a fine art. The experiments were numerous and costly; but the result was a triumph. It was Bass's bitter beer. The first consignment sent out to India produced a most favourable impression. Its popularity was instantaneous. When the next cargo followed the success was confirmed and complete. Hodgson, with his moneyed monopoly and his Eastern standing of half a century, could not withstand the competition with Burton. The price of his produce fell, and Bass steadily progressed in favour, until his name became a household word in India. This invention of bitter beer was the key to a splendid fortune. The trade to-day between the Burton firm and the Eastern Empire is one of colossal proportions.

It was what we call chance that introduced Bass to India. Chance brought him into notice at Liverpool. Until 1827 Messrs. Bass appear to have exported all their bitter beer for that Indian consumption for which it was originally manufactured. In that year, however, an accident was the agency for introducing it to another constituency. A cargo of 300 hogsheads of bitter beer was wrecked in the Irish Channel. The salvage was landed at Liverpool. It was disposed of for the benefit of the underwriters; but instead of being reshipped to Calcutta, it was drunk at the great Lancashire port. It gained instant

favour, and the north-west of England and Ireland became a great market for 'Bass.' In the Liverpool of to-day, at the Gill-street stores of Messrs. Ihlers & Bell—the great exporters—may be seen at a time 2000 butts of Bass, each butt holding 108 gallons, and each worth 10*l.*; while at the North-end stores of the same firm there are 3000 butts. Messrs. Ihlers & Bell send to the Brazils, Pernambuco, and other distant markets about 5,000,000 quart bottles a year, and pay Bass & Co. over 60,000*l.* a year. Several bottling firms in London and Scotland pay the Burton firm similar sums for export only.

It was not until the Exhibition year of 1851 that Bass acquired an important hold upon London. The London brewers considered their position impregnable; but in that year of all nations, Mr. Bass took up a place in the metropolis which has grown stronger every succeeding year. An Englishman's heart is reached through his stomach, and it was at the refreshment department of the world's show that Bass gained the affections of London. Messrs. Masters & Younghusband divided the commissariat at the Crystal Palace. With both firms Mr. Michael Thomas Bass obtained permission to lay on his bitter beer in draught. All the world and his wife were tempted, they tasted, and were conquered; and if the Prince Consort's Universal Exhibition did not introduce the period of universal peace, it brought about universal bitter beer. It was just about this time, when 'Bass' was achieving a wide popularity, that a deadly blow was aimed at its reputation. Seven-and-twenty years suffice to cover many matters of moment with the cold mantle of oblivion, and the great pale-ale controversy

of 1852—which was more bitter than the bitterest beer—is well-nigh forgotten. It owed its origin to an allegation made in a series of lectures on hygiene, by M. Payen, delivered at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers at Paris, that the bitter of bitter beer was not derived from hops, but owed its presence to strychnine. The English medical press gave currency and comment to this serious statement, which met with emphatic denial by the Burton brewers. The public was alarmed, and M. Payen persisted that the French Government were aware that large quantities of strychnine were made in Paris, and that its pernicious use did not prevail there, but that the poison was exported to England in order to fabricate bitter beer. The Burton brewers triumphantly refuted the calumny, and showed its base untruth in a most signal manner. They called in the services of a commission of acute and scientific investigators. The published report of these experts (who submitted to severe analysis bitter beer, brewed before M. Payen's accusation, in bottle and barrel, and from wholesale and retail places all over the country) states that the result of the chemical and microscopical examination of forty samples of bitter beer, pale ale, or India pale ale, brewed by Messrs. Bass & Co. and by Messrs. Allsopp & Sons, and obtained under circumstances which precluded the possibility of error, fallacy, or of preparation for the selection, is in every case recorded as follows: '*Analysis*. The produce of malt and hops, and the constituents pure spring-water; not any other ingredient, either organic or inorganic.' The commissioners added other important evidence as to the quality of these beers: 'First, that the bitter beers

of Messrs. Bass & Co., and of Messrs. Allsopp & Sons, contain only a moderate amount of alcohol; and, secondly, that they contain an unusually large quantity of bitter extract, consisting of the extract of hops.' They concluded the report of their scientific investigations by adding a recommendation of bitter beer, which, considering their high position as chemists, pharmacutists, surgeons, and physicians, is worthy of quotation in these pages. They write:

'From the pure and wholesome nature of the ingredients employed, the moderate proportion of alcohol present, and the very considerable quantity of aromatic anodyne bitter, derived from hops, contained in these beers, they tend to preserve the tone and vigour of the stomach, and conduce to the restoration of the health of that organ when in a state of weakness or debility.

'These bitter beers differ from all other preparations of malt, in containing a smaller amount of extractive matter, thus being less viscid and saccharine, and consequently more easy of digestion; they resemble, indeed, from their lightness, a wine of malt, rather than an ordinary fermented infusion; and it is very satisfactory to find that a beverage of such general consumption is entirely free from every kind of impurity.

'The admirers, therefore, of the bitter beer manufactured by the celebrated brewers we have mentioned may enjoy with advantage this their favourite beverage. The report so commonly circulated, that it contained a deadly poison, was a severe reflection on the sagacity and judgment of the members of the medical profession; because it is perfectly well known that bitter beer or pale ale first acquired, and afterwards

maintained, its general celebrity in consequence of the universal recommendation of our profession—a recommendation which is now proved to have had the best possible foundation.’

This is the age of adulteration, and it is not surprising that the British public received a scare from the smart Parisian’s novel alarm of a ‘French invasion.’ But it was impossible for an assertion so mendacious and mischievous to receive a moment’s credence from people who knew the mercantile character of Bass & Co. In the preparation of their bitter beer, scrupulous pains are employed in getting the finest malt, the best hops, and the purest water; the greatest cleanliness and the most exact skill are directed to the process of brewing; while the reputation and wealth of the firm have been altogether built up by an unswerving and undeviating honesty, and a constant conscientious determination to manufacture the most acceptable article that a combination of capital and chemistry can produce.

So much for the history of bitter beer. Something now as to the breweries of Messrs. Bass & Co. Brewing is the staple industry of Burton-upon-Trent. There is nothing particularly picturesque about the place. It lies in a flat position on the eastern border of Staffordshire. Its many chimneys and its monotonous warehouses, indeed, make a very commonplace town, although the artist might find a pretty ‘bit’ in the gray old Trent bridge, with its thirty-six arches of proud antiquity, the broad broken river, and the wooded slopes of Stapenhill rising on the opposite bank. The railway position of the town is, however, a central one; and while the Midland Company is the principal carrier, three other railway

systems—the London and North-Western, the Great Northern, and the North Staffordshire—run into the breweries. Burton is indeed a curious congeries of railway lines—‘a mighty maze, but not without a plan.’ The brewery lines cross the principal streets and cut up the borough into every denomination of geometrical shapes. Fussy little locomotives, with trains of barrels behind them, are puffing everywhere. Bass & Co. have, indeed, twelve miles of railway on their own premises, and a working arrangement with the Midland Company over seven miles of their branches. The firm are customers to the Midland Railway to the extent of some thousands of pounds annually. In one year, that ending June 30, 1878, the firm paid the railway and canal companies and other carriers in that period the sum of 180,102*l.* for carriage alone. Some idea of the magnitude of their traffic to London alone may be gathered from the fact that the ale-stores of Messrs. Bass outside St. Pancras Station cover three floors, each two acres in extent, and each containing 30,000 barrels of 36 gallons of ale. Besides this, Bass & Co. have a large export bottling store under the Midland Goods Dépôt at St. Pancras, with accommodation for 8000 butts, together with export stores at Poplar for the continental business.

The breweries of Messrs. Bass are spread all over Burton. They have grown with the trade from the smallest of premises to quite a town of themselves. How great has been that development may be best inferred from the statement that the amount of business transacted during the whole of one year, 1827, by the father of Mr. Michael Thomas Bass, was not more than is now achieved by

his son's firm in three days! The area of the father's brewery was that of a moderately large garden; that of the son's occupies freehold business premises extending over forty-five acres, of the value of a quarter of a million sterling, and more than 100 acres of leasehold property. Then steam-power was unknown in the place; now Bass & Co.'s brewery has thirty-two steam-engines daily at work, nine locomotives, two portable engines, and 100 powerful cart-horses. Mechanical and scientific appliances have largely minimised manual labour, yet the Burton staff number nearly 3000; while in addition hundreds are required to manage their places of business all over the United Kingdom. The father produced comparatively only a few barrels per week, delivered by his own carts; the son, in the course of a brewing season, sends out by train and ship one million barrels, and the average annual amount of his business is assessed at 2,400,000*l.* In malt-tax and license-duty Bass & Co. pay in one year 286,000*l.* Professor Leone Levi, in a calculation drawn up by him in March 1871, states that the yearly revenue derived from beer and British and foreign wines and spirits amounts to about twenty-eight millions sterling, or considerably more than a third of the whole annual national revenue, towards which the firm of Bass & Co. pay upwards of 780*l.* per day.

The art of brewing may be divided into three processes: the manufacture of malt, the production of the fermentable fluid called 'wort,' and the conversion of 'wort' into beer. Messrs. Bass & Co. are their own maltsters. The firm have thirty-three malting establishments at Burton; while they possess branch maltings at Ret-

ford and Lincoln. Sir John Barleycorn, who acts as our cicerone to the Burton breweries, takes us to the Shobnall maltings, which are the latest and largest of the buildings devoted to this branch of the trade. They form of themselves seven complete malt-houses in one block of buildings. In the upper story of one of the houses Sir John Barleycorn points out a trifling heap of over 5000 quarters of barley. He tells us that an average yearly brewing of Messrs. Bass's demands 300,000 quarters of malt—that is, over two million bushels; that an acre of land produces about thirty-two bushels of barley; and that close upon 70,000 acres are thus doing nothing else but growing barley for Bass & Co.'s beer. Another 3000 acres are employed in growing the 36,000 cwt. of hops which are required for this annual maltage. In the hop storehouse 10,000 'pockets' of hops may be seen at one time. The market price of one 'pocket' is 20*l.*, so that the value of hops alone in stock represents a capital of 200,000*l.* The process of malting requires a close attention to little things. First of all the grain is 'blown'—a screening operation by means of which the inferior seeds and impurities are eliminated. Then it is steeped in water to a depth of six or seven inches. It remains in the cistern for some fifty hours. The 'couch-frame' is the next transition of the germinating barley, where it remains for twenty to thirty hours to swell; and the various stages through which it passes on its way to the kiln take up about ten days. Notice the exquisite cleanliness of the kiln-floors. The smooth tiled area occupies an enormous superficial space; but the faintest defect in the cement jointing is at once marked with a white cross for instant remedy.

When roasting has completed the malting process, the grain is screened and conveyed to the dry-malt store ready for mashing.

And this brings Sir John Barleycorn to the breweries proper. They comprise three great breweries: the Old, or 'Red' Brewery; the Middle, or 'White' Brewery; and the New, or 'Blue' Brewery. They extend over three sides of a parallelogram broken by sheds, stores, offices, cooperages, malt-houses, &c., all connected by railway lines. Burton owes its supreme position as the brewing centre of the world to its natural water-springs. These well-waters, submitted to exhaustive and repeated analysis, show a complete immunity from organic matter. Their chemical composition, however, contains an emphatic percentage of sulphate of lime, a large proportion of the sulphates of potash and magnesia, and a considerable amount of carbonate of lime. The Burton well-water is palpably a hard water, and *a priori* would be considered bad water for brewing. But though hard at first, it really becomes a soft water, as contained in the beer. As an analysis which appeared in the columns of the *Lancet* shows, 'in the course of boiling, the excess of carbonic acid in the water, by which the carbonates of lime and magnesia are dissolved, is expelled, and these salts are precipitated; while the alkaline phosphates present in malt have the power of decomposing and precipitating sulphate of lime, phosphate of lime, and, a soluble alkaline sulphate being formed, the greater part of the phosphate of lime so formed is redissolved in the acid generated during fermentation. Thus the water from being at first hard becomes comparatively soft, and in this state is well suited for the

extraction of the active properties of the malt and hops used in the manufacture of bitter beer.' The chemical constitution of the Burton water explains also another circumstance connected with Burton ales. The depurating power of the lime clarifies the beer, and renders it bright, 'transparent without the aid of 'finings.' The sulphate of lime is obtained from the gypseous deposits of certain strata of the district; and it has been computed that the average amount of gypsum derived from the water used in brewing 1000 barrels of ale may be estimated at 250 pounds weight. The revenue estimate of the annual brew of Messrs. Bass & Co. is 1,000,000 barrels, so that firm are absorbers of 200,000,000 pounds of gypsum each year! The Artesian borings are 200 feet deep, and Sir John Barleycorn shows a pardonable pride in the powerful pumps.

We are now in the midst of the breweries. A network of railways. An atmosphere of ale. Barrels everywhere. Full casks and empty casks; thirty-six gallon casks and eighteen gallon casks. Casks are the masters of the situation. There they are being rolled from drays, or loaded into railway wagons. Trains of beer, drays of beer, with Titanic horses and drivers as rotund as the barrels. A brewer's horse with even a suspicion of ribs would be as great a natural curiosity as the dodo; while a lean and gaunt brewer's drayman would be a *lusus nature* that Barnum might madly covet.

Now for the process of brewing. The malt, after being again submitted to a winnowing process, is conveyed to the rollers by a 'Jacob's ladder'—an endless band, suggestive of 'perpetual motion,' with a series of small tin buckets attached to it, like a

dredging machine. These cans load themselves at the lowest level and empty at the highest. Sir John Barleycorn speaks of the precautions that have to be observed against explosion in this process, as the malt-dust is highly combustible, being almost in a gaseous state. Then the malt is crushed between two iron cylinders with roughened surfaces, which revolve rapidly in diverse directions. Now slightly crushed, and rendered more ready to yield the saccharine matter to be extracted in the mash-tubs, the malt is conveyed by the agency of an Archimedian screw to the various hoppers, which are placed immediately over the mash-tubs. Such tubs! Compared with them, the traditional tun of Heidelberg is as a child's porringer. There is a whole series of these megatherian vessels. Seven of them are on one floor of the Old Brewery, and about three times as many in the 'White' and 'Blue' Breweries, each capable of mashing sixty quarters of malt. Bigness, in fact, is the predominant impression Bass & Co.'s breweries give you. Everything is so Brobdingnagian in its proportions that there is danger of one's phrenological equilibrium suffering from the sudden development of the bump of wonder. When the mash-tubs have been supplied with a precisely measured quantity of water, heated to a temperature of from 140 to 170 degrees, the charged hoppers are opened. The malt descends into the mash-tuns, and the process of mashing begins. A revolving series of rakes, set on a central pivot, and called, in brewing parlance, 'the porcupine,' commences to beat up the entire mash until it attains the consistency of gruel. The mash then stands until the saccharine element of the malt has been thoroughly

extracted. This operation takes from one to three hours. Anon the 'sweet wort' is drawn off from the tub, and conveyed in pipes by powerful pumps to the 'under-back,' another Titanic receptacle, from which it is passed into the coppers, and when brought to boiling-point is mixed with the hops. The exhausted malt, now 'grains,' is let down a shaft to the floor below, whence it is carted away. Hops and malt having boiled together for some hours with a fierceness that suggests that the sweets are quarrelling with the bitters, and that makes the earth vibrate with its violence, the whole is then run off from the caldrons into the 'hop-backs,' large open tanks with bottoms of perforated copper. In these the hops are separated from the 'wort,' which is now conducted by pipes to the coolers at the top of the building; while the hops are pressed by a hydraulic machine patented for the purpose, and subsequently disposed of for manure. The cooling-room may be likened to a lagoon of liquor, a lake of beer, a waveless tideless ocean of ale. From the refrigerators the 'wort'—now a near approach to ale—is conducted to the fermenting squares. The process of fermentation takes up from two and a half to three days, and Sir John Barleycorn shows us a hundred squares on one floor holding about fifty barrels each. A singular natural transmutation now takes place, and the quantity of carbonic gas given off is considerable. A better description of this mysterious change could not be given than one which appeared in the *Daily News*, and we avail ourselves of part of the account: 'Hitherto the "wort" has been a dull phlegmatic fluid, seemingly incapable of being stirred into animation. But the yeast soon

alters its temperament. We see the process of active fermentation in a variety of different stages. In one square the "wort" is sulking—the yeast has not yet stimulated it into briskness, and has only evolved on the surface a white-brownish froth. The contents of another square have thrown up a "head" resembling a dingy iceberg; the surface of another is like snow that has lain a couple of days in a city churchyard. There is a pungent sweetish smell, not unpleasant, as we have it here with plenty of ventilation, but not a happy thing to encounter in the bottom of a well, or in the far interior of a coal-mine. It is the carbonic acid gas we smell, evolved in the destruction of the sugar and the formation of the alcohol. A lighted candle held close to the surface of the fermentation burns blue for a second, and then goes out. I hold my face where the candle had been, and am right fain to withdraw it while as yet consciousness remains. In the "squares" for the first time we recognise beer. It would be possible for a man to get drunk upon this mawkish loaded fluid, if he could bring himself to undergo the preliminary ordeal of swallowing what tastes so remarkably nasty. But let the fermentation be finished, and the cleansing be accomplished, and nastiness will no longer be the characteristic of the fluid.

This fermentation having proceeded to a sufficient extent, it is checked in the 'cleansing'-room. And in this chamber Dominie Sampson might have been forgiven for giving vent in his bewilderment to the expression 'Prodigious!' On only one of a series of similar floors behold in one glance 1248 casks, each capable of accommodating 160 gallons! The ale is run into these casks through the 'union'

pipes, and by a scientific arrangement these are kept constantly full, while the ale continues to discharge its barm. The beer thus cleanses itself, and becomes perfectly bright, and ready to be let off into the barrels awaiting its reception. Each cask is filled to the bung; a handful of Kent hops is flung in to 'feed the ale'; the bung is driven home; and the practice of the brewer's art is completed.

But Sir John Barleycorn has much more to show us. There is the laboratory, or experimental brewery, where skilful chemists are analysing water and making experiments; and the allowance store, where a liberal share of beer is allowed to each *employé* every day, thus putting him out of the reach of temptation in the way of surreptitious 'tapping.' There are few of the men who refuse the daily allowance of ale generously afforded by the firm. It is the custom of grocers to allow their apprentices the run of all the dainties in which they deal, giving them extravagant access to the fruits and candies; and they soon grow sick, and avoid the fruit for the remainder of their days. Confectioners are equally generous with their young assistants, who have a wild debauch on tarts and sweets, and are surfeited for life. But with the lusty young brewer the surfeiting sensation never arrives. Not that brewers, as a class, are intemperate. Really no representation could be more remote from the truth. It is Macaulay who remarks that 'the natives of wine countries are generally the most sober of mankind, and that in places where wine is a rarity drunkenness abounds. A northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres finding themselves able to indulge without restraint, no-

thing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion; and, after wine has been for a few weeks their daily drink, they become even more temperate than they ever had been in their own country.' Macaulay applies this liquor comparison to liberty, but it will equally illustrate the relation of Bass & Co.'s men to Bass & Co.'s beer.

We are now conducted to the store-rooms, which must be great, because while there is a demand for beer throughout the entire twelve months, the actual process of brewing can only be conducted during six months, or at the most seven months, of the year. The cellarage covers acres of ground, and contains samples of ales and stouts of all prices. In one store into which we are introduced there are stocked some 120,000 barrels. Millions of gallons of beer are warehoused in these long low capacious rooms. Barrels to the right of us, barrels to the left of us, barrels in front of us, barrels behind us. Barrels everywhere, like the water round the fated phantom ship of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*; but here the resemblance ceases, since there are 'many drops to drink.' And as one is conducted through room after room in this vast arsenal of ale, one can scarcely refrain from hazarding a conjecture as to how many 'drunks and disorderlies' and 'drunks and incapables' these casks contain; although it has been wisely said that 'the people of England are yearly becoming more sober, and that towards that result no one has contributed, or is contributing, more than Michael Thomas Bass, the biggest brewer of the best beer in the world.'

The cooperage, together with the saw-mills, fitters' and other workshops, employs something

like 500 hands, and gives one some idea of the extent of Messrs. Bass's trade. The magnitude of the concern has been thus vividly realised by a previous writer, who says: 'The firm uses as many as 60,000 railway trucks in the course of six months, and often as many as 370 trucks in a day, that, placed close together, would make a train one mile and 453 yards long; or would reach, say, from the Marble Arch, along the whole length of Oxford-street, to the beginning of Holborn. Mr. William Bass could possibly tell almost every one of the casks he had in use in business by head-mark, or enter the whole of them on a page of his cask stock-book. What a tremendous page it would be that would receive the numbers of the casks belonging to the firm now! The stock of casks necessary to carry on the business consists of 46,901 butts, 159,608 hogsheads, 139,753 barrels, and 197,597 kilderkins, in all 543,869 casks. Concerning these numbers it is scarcely possible to convey an idea of what they really represent. We can only try. St. Peter's at Rome is 450 feet high; put on end, these casks would make 2440 pillars as high as St. Peter's, and they would make 8300 pillars as high as St. Paul's, London. If they were laid end to end, starting from London in the direction of Manchester, they would overlap Manchester by more than ten miles.'

Messrs. Bass & Co. sell their ale in casks. The bottle trade is a separate one. With so many gallons of bitter beer so many labels for bottles are issued. One year's issue of these labels amounts to over a hundred millions, and the printer's contract for the same is something considerable. To prevent the public being deceived by unscrupulous dealers, great

pains are exercised by the Burton firm to detect a fraudulent use of the trade-mark. The chief difficulty, indeed, in their business is in pirated trade-marks and bad beer sold under imitations of their labels. It is said that Germany used to be a great culprit in these frauds, and Brussels was an extensive emporium for base Bass; but recent international treaties are leading to more honest dealing. Messrs. Bass & Co. are keenly jealous of their reputation. They will not dispose of their goods to traders who are not masters of the art of bottling, or whose cellars are not favourable to keeping the beer in condition; while the pains that are taken at Burton to keep each barrel sweet and clean is one of the most striking experiences of a visit to the breweries.

A description of Messrs. Bass & Co.'s breweries without some personal reference to the head of the firm would be woefully incomplete. In this connection we may remark that the business of Messrs. Bass & Co. has, since the 1st of March 1880, been carried on by a private company, registered under the name of Bass, Ratcliffe, & Gretton (Limited). This company was formed of the existing partners in the firm upon the basis of their present capital, and it is not intended to offer shares to the public. Mr. Michael Thomas Bass, the senior and principal member of the company, is in his eighty-second year. Born at Burton-on-Trent, and educated at the grammar school of that town, he is the most beloved man in Beeropolis, which he has made with his business energy and ability, and which has largely profited by his princely generosity. He has represented the borough of Derby for a space of over thirty years. His parlia-

mentary connection with the town is of an affectionate character, such, perhaps, as exists between no other constituency and its members. His last election address to the men of Derby began, 'My dear kind friends,' and in these tender words is expressed much of the personal feeling which exists between representative and represented. A Liberal in politics, he has shown that 'the Liberal man deviseth Liberal things;' for Mr. Bass is not the Radical 'Liberal' whose 'Liberalism' is synonymous with illiberality, and who postures as the good Samaritan, but without the necessary oil and all-important twopence. Mr. Bass has shown his interest in the borough of Derby by many acts of exceptional munificence. Dr. Samuel Johnson, when taking stock as an executor under Mr. Thrale's will of the brewery that afterwards became Barclay & Perkins', remarked to Topham Beauclerk that he had at last found 'the source of boundless prosperity and inexhaustible riches, with the potentiality of growing riches beyond the dreams of avarice.' Mr. Bass owes his colossal fortune to his mash-tub; but if he is a modern Cæsar he is also a modern Mæcenas. He may rank with the late George Peabody and the Baroness Burdett-Coutts in acts of public and private philanthropy. He has been in a particular sense Derby's benefactor. The sun of his beneficence has shone on Radicals and Tories alike. He has given that town free swimming-baths, a spacious recreation ground, and a free library and museum costing him alone something like 80,000*l.* He divides a few superfluous thousands among the local charities. His private benevolence is known to be as great as his public philanthropy.

No deserving charity appeals to him in vain. He is the particular prey of that most imposing of the army of impostors—the begging-letter brigade.

Mr. Bass has high qualities of head as well as heart. Of his keen business capacity the Burton breweries are sufficient evidence. Although not a 'pushing' member of the House of Commons, he is a much respected one, and more than one Cabinet has sought his advice in times when wisdom and experience were required. A peerage has been offered to and declined by Mr. Bass, who playfully protests that he prefers to remain in the beerage, and thinks the honour of representing the opinions of the men of Derby in the Commons greater than the distinction of sitting in the Upper House. The most prominent of the measures promoted by Mr. Bass is the Act against that 'modern troubadour,' the Italian organ-man. Londoners only know how that Bill was needed. Poor John Leech was ground to death by hurdy-gurdies. How many able brain-workers less known to fame have been so too! Mr. Bass has largely interested himself in the cause of railway servants. He founded the Railway Servants' Orphanage at Derby, and started the *Railway Servants' Gazette*; and while politicians were interesting themselves in the great Eastern Question, he discovered another Great Eastern question, at which at his advanced age he kept working perseveringly, so as to make the starved line profitable to the shareholders. Commercial travellers likewise owe much to the interest Mr. Bass shows in their welfare. The other day he gave practical illustration of the solicitude he takes in the progress of

the excellent schools for the necessitous children of that body by a subscription of a thousand guineas.

Mr. Bass married in 1835 the eldest daughter of Major Samuel Arden, of Longcroft Hall, Staffordshire. He has two sons. Michael Arthur Bass, the elder, is a county magistrate for Stafford, and member in the Liberal interest for the Eastern Division of that county; and the younger son, Mr. Hamar Bass, represents in the present Parliament the Liberals of Tamworth. Both share their father's administrative business capacity, Parliamentary aptitude, and amiable nature.

In thus dealing discursively with the Burton Breweries, we have chosen Messrs. Bass & Company as the chief of some thirty other Burton firms, all more or less famous for the purity of their products, and which, with the premier brewers, Messrs. Bass, represent nearly one-tenth of the entire brewing industry of the United Kingdom. As old-established as the house of Bass, and second to that firm in extent and position, come Messrs. Allsopp & Sons, who have agencies all over the world. Their India Ale is one of the specialties of the trade, and in the East they and Messrs. Bass are as the rival Kings of Brentford. Among other Burton firms we may cite for separate mention those of Messrs. Salt & Co.; Messrs. Inde, Coope, & Co.; the Burton Brewery Company (Limited); Messrs. Truman, Hanbury, & Co.; Messrs. Charles Hill & Son; Messrs. Mann, Crossman, & Co.; Messrs. Worthington & Co.; Messrs. Robinson & Co. (who brew a sparkling non-intoxicating pale ale); and Messrs. Bindley & Co., who won the gold medal at the Paris Exposition of 1878.

PORTRAITS OF MY INDIAN HELPS.

Among a legion of tumbling-over-each-other servants I maintained in a large up-country station of the so-called benighted Presidency of India, there are a few note-worthy personages whose portraits, in pen and pencil, I am wishful to sketch, and of these, first My Cook.

I shall introduce him to you,

old regimental tunic—following, basket on head filled with the day's provisions; and as he, the cook, passes me, there is an air of settled thoughtfulness on his wrinkled brow, which declares, as plainly as A B C, that he is mentally calculating upon how many and what particular articles he



reader—just as my artist-friend has here depicted—stepping out briskly up the long walk of my garden, fresh from morning market, his *filius Achates*, the kitchen coolie—who is not military, though he has half-clothed himself in an

can, without much fear of detection, lay on a few additional pice to the prime cost, thus 'doing' the Mem Sabe, and spoiling the Egyptians. He is, as you see, a dark copper-coloured Asiatic, dressed in flowing white robes,

red turban, a pretentious umbrella in his hand, and a yellow-striped-and-spotted kerchief thrown across his shoulders. What the utility of this last-named article of his 'get up,' worn in that situation, may be, I cannot take upon myself to explain. Presently, when I show you into his kitchen, we shall find robe, turban, bandana—almost every out-door vestment—hung up, and their wearer operating almost unclothed, and his head as bald as a coot. My cook is sleek and oily; much *ghee* (clarified butter) has made him fat. His eyes are red and tearful—the effect, he vows, of over-much pungent wood smoke, but I opine of over-much bazaar-distilled palm toddy—and his lips are rosy, or, speaking by the card, brickdusty in colour, from the habitual use of the masticatory betel, particles of which staining compound, with a shred or so of tobacco, now and again find their way into his dainty dishes—

'As where's that palace whereinto foul things
Sometimes intrude not?'—

giving them a quaint and unexpected flavour.

From what district of Southern India he hailed, I know not; what were his religious tenets I never discovered. Sometimes, when I have seen him handling gingerly and with apparent disgust, the feast-day York or Cumberland ham, I have put him down as Mussulman or a native Hebrew from about Cochin; but again, when I have, haphazard, stolen a march upon him and found him 'tucking into'—pardon the vulgarity—purloined slices of that delicacy, then my opinion of his faith inclined to a proselytism to the Romish or Anglican Church. Once I was told that he was a Progressive Hindoo, a disciple of the reformer Baboo

Chunder Sen; but as the statement was made to gloss over a terrible infringement of the laws of the great Indian bogie Caste, why, I swallowed the 'crammer' with a good many grains of his, or rather of my own, salt.

But no matter whence he sprung, what faith he professed, and his tippling and other proclivities, his culinary endowments—first learnt, he puzzled me by saying, under '*one old blanket*,' meaning, as I afterwards discovered, the tutelage of a venerable epicurean of the Plunkett family—were certainly A 1. No better *cordon bleu* from Cape Comorin to Cabul, in compounding airey (hare) soup, sicken (chicken) curry, feece (fish) cutlets, wool-o-wongs (vols-au-vent), soup-flates (soufflés), and other toothsome viands with names equally tortured in his rickety English; and as for his piney-yapple yice (pine-apple ice)—though on this cold spring day, while I am trying to write my cook's history, the very word ice brings on an ague fit—it makes my mouth water to recall the taste of this confection. And how he contrived so artistically to fabricate the soup-flates and eesthews (stews), and what not, with the rude apparatus he used, that would pose a professor of the School of Cookery. I said that we would go into his kitchen; so let us cross the compound (yard), and enter. It will bear inspection; though, as a rule, the quarter where an Oriental *chef* is officiating is about the last place in an Indian homestead for a fastidious person to pry into; for sights will meet his eye, odours reach his nose, and details become patent, which, when savoury morsels are handed him at dinner, may be unpleasantly recalled.

It is a very primitive sort of a tenement this sanctum of my *chef*; and a rough construction of badly-

burnt bricks under a huge chimney, together with some more loose stones and bricks set on the mud-floor, constitute the fireplaces, where, with junks of coarse jungle-wood, and a few handfuls of charcoal, Coakey—so his fellow-servants call him, and I don't know his name—is hard at work. Here and there is a stray metal utensil of English shape and make, which Coakey does not seem to care about; for the mass of his *batterie de cuisine* is composed of fragile chatties (earthen vessels) of different shapes and sizes, the appetising contents of which either the great man himself, or his male or female satellite, is stirring up with the end of a charred stick, or with a ladle formed from a cocoanut-shell. Given these rough-and-ready appliances, and suitable materials of course, my cook will, in the twinkling of an eye, turn out flesh-pots fit to set before a king. Put him in front of a 'range,' with its kettles and pans, jacks and spits, coal and coke; and ten to one his right hand forgets its cunning, and he breaks down in the simplest and most stereotyped of his productions. Neither is he to the manner born of these 'Europe muster' implements, nor did the 'one old blanket' afore-said teach him their use. And where else, think you, but in the open air, with a host of approving ayahs, butlers, maties, coolies, and such gentry around, and, more likely than not, a starved pariah dog hungrily watching the proceedings, could he whirl and twirl the zinc cylinders, in which the ingredients are being frozen into the ambrosial 'yice,' his masterpiece, the process of gelefaction being now and again tested by the lookers-on in a manner we had better know nothing about?

My cook, as I have more than hinted, is addicted to the cure that cheers and also inebriates, by which not unfrequently, and on particularly inconvenient occasions, he is prone to be overcome. Verbally remonstrated with—for he is much too great a 'nigger' sweet—for recourse to the usually handy *argumentum baculinum*—he becomes 'cheeky,' and threatens an immediate resignation of office. 'Too much bobberees. Sabe can get odder cook finish dis same dinner, now dis minute; I go home.' But the Sabe—i.e. myself—making a hasty and apologetic retreat, Coakey is pacified, and the meal is proceeded with.

Besides alcohol, my cook dearly loves the vilest of bazaar tobacco, and he would rather die than part from his betel. Other less venial idiosyncrasies he holds to, among them peculation and mendacity, the bane of all his tribe. Lastly his detractors say that he thoroughly disregards the obloquy which the playwright tells us attaches to the woman-beater:

'The man who lifts his hand against
woman
Is a wretch, whom 'twere gross flattery
To call a coward;'

and that in the marital hut he soundly chastises the wife of his wives of his bosom.

But all these failings, and more, I humbly bear with, well knowing the ills that Anglo-Indian flesh is heir to, when the unsucculent meats of the country fall into the unskilful hands of him who is locally designated *Coolie Cook*.

Another man of mark in my establishment was SIVA, MAHLEE, or gardener.

The artist has hit him off exactly, and at a glance you may see what fashion of an Eastern native he is, and rightly conjecture that a Sutton, or a Carter, or an

other horticulturist you please, has had nothing to do with his training, which has descended to him by caste. Nor did the primogenitors from whom he derived his calling name him Siva, or Seevah—take which you like. I myself, in a moment of inspiration, have christened him after the Atropos of the Hindu Trinity, to denote the terrible propensity he possessed for killing my plants and flowers by erroneous treatment. But,

of the most inventive depicted in the woodcut.

Jumping over the low wall of the garden, ostensibly to save time, there rushes up to him a very nearly garmentless boy, a scion of the house of Seevah. A few words are interchanged, the mahlee throws down his mam-motie (hoe), raises his hands upwards, cries out loudly and pit-eously, 'Uppah! Uppah!' an ejaculation of intense grief; and



besides being a herb-slayer, Siva the Destroyer was, in other respects, a scapegrace, to put it most mildly. His time of coming to morning digging and delving and watering varied with the extent of the past night's native theatricals or nautch—the sensational acting of the one, the fascinating dancing of the other; and his ingenious ways of cutting short the recognised hours of work were many, clever, and often indisputable. Here is one

before I can inquire what is the matter, he too bounds over the walls, and tears down the lines, exclaiming, 'Uppah!' And why? Because he is supposed to have learnt that his wife, child, mother, any relation that suits, is *in extremis* with cholera—that is always the pet disease, as admitting of no delay—and the head of the family is needed for the last dying speech, the will, or the farewells of the sufferer. When Seevah returns at discretion, and

the worse for mango-brandy or date-toddy, he enters into explanations. It was not his wife, it was his friend's wife; not his own child, the Jemidar's child; the native doctor had made an incorrect diagnosis, and it was not cholera at all,—or any excuse, indeed, he can think of to make me suppose that, from first to last, the whole thing has not been an organised and prearranged 'plant.'

In addition, too, to being a professed schemer, my gardener is a systematic robber. No one in Nizampore (the assumed name of my station) has, at this early period of the season, beet-root in his garden ready for the table: that I know as a horticultural fact. How think you it occurs, then, that I see that vegetable, and, so to speak, recognise the very colour and taste of my own roots, when dining with Colonel Platoon? And more: how comes it to pass that there are so many holes and deficiencies in the rows where my 'Carter's Blood Red' is planted? Platoon, when I say at his hospitable board, 'Hullo, old man! beet? I fancied that there was none in cantonment bar mine; where did you pick it up?' expresses ignorance; he takes the goods the gods—i.e. his butler and cook—provide him, and asks no questions. Seevah, when I require him to account for the hiatus, unhesitatingly accuses the neighbouring Lancers of the peculation: 'Plenty too much tief dem barrack-mans;' though the villain knows well enough that he pulled up and sold the stuff to as great rogues as himself, Platoon's men. Once more. There is a dance at the General's, and some of the invited have prayed me for roses, which I have been churlish enough to decline cutting. Nevertheless, at that same fête, I look with

suspicion at flowrets, the counterfeit presentment of mine, adorning ladies' dresses and men's buttonholes; and next morning I gaze in anger on a terrible falling off in the buds and blooms of my choice standards. The Destroyer—for it goes without saying that he is the culprit, and has put money in his purse by the spoliation—hotly denies any hand in it, that of course; and shifts the onus on another gardener, whom he swears he saw with a basket of John Battles (Géant de Battailles), Cockey Yalps (Coquette des Alpes), Jews-Christians (Jules Chrétien), and other roses coming from my compound; supposes that I had recanted and given the flowers to the supplicants, or he would have stopped and 'licked' the rascal; and so on.

Eccentric, not to say fallacious, were Seevah's views of floriculture. He went much upon the principle that as all natives live and thrive on curry and rice only, so all flowers and vegetables required for their existence and well-being but one stereotyped kind of earthy sustenance, and that the handiest. 'Why, master,' he would argue, 'kick up all dis bobberee (fuss), why say, "Malilee, you put dis mole (mould) dat pot, you fill dose tubs dis yearth"? Can't he lef lone wid all same muster (kind) ground? Flower how can know difference? I plenty understand, sar. Ten year, I Major Smit mahlee; betterer garden dan dis I make' (this is to rile me) 'all dat time, neber once changey soil; *achai botè achai*, good, very best yaster, plock, gole-pedder, all ting, dat Mister Smit he grow, get too much prize.'

ASHBEE and SYE, two handmaidens, who waited upon the ladies of my family, and whose portraits you behold, must next find place among these sketches.

Ashbee, the elder, is well into the sere and, as far as complexion goes, the very, very yellow leaf. Syé is much more juvenile, but still no chicken, and is duskier, not to say blacker, in hue. Ashbee is staid and steady, Syé frisky, if, indeed, a Hindoo maid or matron ever gained that qualification. She is comely too, after her kind; likely enough, might have been a village belle, and had ryots running riots—pardon the bad pun—after her; whereas Ashbee in her



present time and tide is unquestionably ugly, and never, even in her girlhood, could have needed the 'yasmak' (veil) which, as a Mahometan, she habitually wears, to conceal her beauty from bazaar beaux. 'Old Ayah'—Ashbee's household name—has been all her life a stay-at-home in the district where we know her; but young Ayah, the other feminine, has gadded about, crossed the big waters in P. & O. and other steamers, and is chokeful of

narrations, chiefly personal and fibby, of the ins and outs of these vessels. She has promenaded London streets, and Paris boulevards in her 'serang' and other native costume, to the chaff of the vulgar boys of both cities; and her ear-rings, nose-rings, and bangles have led her to some risk of being forcibly plundered. She has seen the Queen and the Empress Eugénie,—'missie can believe I no see difference odder lady,'—and once she had 'Princie Wales' pointed out to her 'walking in park like one common coolie-man.' The sisters do not lead an over-sororial life under my roof-tree, but wrangle and bicker constantly. Quarrelling is heard in the back verandah. I go to see the cause of it. Ashbee holds in her hands some article or other of a young lady's attire, and is saying: 'Dis belong my missy.' (N.B. The two ayahs serve different daughters of my family, and neither can read English, so the marking goes for nothing.) Syé, more active and stronger, is endeavouring forcibly to wrest the garment away, crying out, 'Never! I swear my missy ting.' Whereon Ashbee fires up; she gives her sister abigail the lie direct: that dame retorts in choice Hindustani, well flavoured with the expressive invectives that tongue is so rich in, and the two are on the point of coming to a stand-up fight, when enters myself, or some one else, and decides the vexed question. And then the victorious ayah, seizing on the gained prize, is busy scratching for a moment or two with a pointed stick on the linen or cotton fabric, and then, with a satisfied 'ugh!' throws it down, marked with a large 'blotch,' as a hieroglyphic for future indisputable recognition.

TOUCH-AND-GO WITH A GREAT ESTATE.

I.

WHEN a lawyer consents to tell the story of the most remarkable case in which he was ever engaged, he does so on the express understanding that the confidences of his clients shall be observed, however long ago they were made. After full consideration I can see no possible objection to telling the story of the most singular piece of business that I ever knew in the course of a very long experience indeed. But my chief reason for finding no objection is that I can do so without naming real names. That being fully understood, I shall be able to keep to the literal truth without having recourse to fictitious incidents in order to lead my readers away from the real quarter. For nothing but the real names, both of places and people, could possibly tell more than I am amply justified in telling. Perhaps, after all, I am a little over-scrupulous; but I don't think that will be regarded as a fault on the wrong side. No doubt some of my readers will gather that the period of my professional adventure was previous to the passing of the Municipal Reform Act of 1835, a date far back enough, at any rate, to give me the right to amuse myself, if not my readers, with a—let me say elderly—solicitor's first contribution to literature. Apart from real names, the facts of the case are true, word for word.

My father and I were in partnership as solicitors in the good old

town of Burgham, which you may place in any county you please. I was born there, and so was my father before me, and my grandfather before him; and the name of Key (to take my first *alias*) was as well known as the spire of St. Michael's. Our office, in the very shadow of the spire, consisted of an outer office for the clerks, of one private room for my father, of another for myself, and of a third, in which an articulated clerk sat among the office-lumber, and amused himself as well as want of opportunity allowed. His name, I remember, was what I will call—more for the sake of appropriateness than of anything else—Richard Musty; and a queer young fellow he was—the queerest, I used to think, within six thousand miles of Burgham. He was a country parson's son, and of about my own age; so that I was ready and even eager when he first came to us to make a friend and companion of him out of office-hours, so far as my greater professional dignity allowed; but it was impossible. What good or return he expected to get out of the premium he had paid us was a mystery; he had found the money hard to raise, and he might just as well have thrown it into the river. He was steady, too steady by half; he was older than, young as he was, than I am now. But he was as fit to be a lawyer as I am to be a poet; and I can't say more. Sometimes I used to think him a born hopeless fool, and I don't believe he ever came to know the difference be-

tween a *cestui que trust* and a *sur-rebutler*. He had never left his father and mother till he went to Cambridge with a view of taking orders; but family misfortunes had obliged him to leave college without a degree, and so—I believe to his intense misery—he had made up his mind to be a failure in another direction. He was always shabby, never too clean, never did anything wrong—morally, never anything right—intellectually, and seemed to have no friends. What he did with his time, in or out of the office, neither myself nor my father was able for weeks to discover.

‘What, in the name of goodness, are you doing there, Musty?’ I remember saying to him at last, when, impelled by a fit of curiosity, I went one day suddenly into his room, and caught him with a camel’s hair paint-brush instead of a pen in his hand, with which he seemed to be busily engaged in washing a skin of parchment with pure water. ‘Have you forgotten that that lease is to be ready in an hour? Not that I expected to get the lease from him in a month, but I wanted an excuse for my sudden intrusion.’

He turned as red as fire.

‘Nothing, nothing at all, Mr. Key,’ said he.

‘“Nothing” is the worst thing you can do here,’ said I sternly. I was idle enough myself in those days, but it was in a very different sort of way. ‘I *must* know what you are doing with that old deed.’

‘It—it isn’t a deed, indeed,’ stammered he, as if his occupation were criminal instead of merely imbecile. ‘Look here, Mr. Key. I found it up there on that shelf, and I don’t imagine it can be of any use to *you*,’ he went on, with a curious emphasis on the ‘*you* :’ if the fellow hadn’t been so sim-

ply scared, and so incapable of such a thing at any time, I should have suspected a sneer. I looked at it, and I was yet more puzzled, for it was not a deed : it was not a legal document at all.

‘It is a mediæval Latin manuscript,’ said he. ‘But it is of no value. So far as I have read, it appears to be a treatise by some monkish writer concerning the Praises of St. Willibrord, who was, I believe, a saint and bishop of the Benedictines. What horrible hideous jargon those miserable monks used to call Latin, to be sure! Just listen here. *Nictelaminibus ita depauperatus*—’

It might have been Hebrew to me; for, though I had been pretty good in Latin at the Grammar-school, the yellow document in question was written in such a close, cramped, ancient, and illegible hand, and was so full of abbreviations and contractions to boot, that Musty’s skill in deciphering a single word a little surprised me.

‘Have you got any more of these?’ asked he.

‘If there’s one,’ said I, ‘there may be fifty. I suppose it came here with old Parson Evans’s papers, when he died—the old rector of St. Michael’s, you know—and, being parchment, I suppose they looked legal. Yes, Musty, I think you had better devote your time to reading them and cleaning them all. It seems to me that’s about all you’re likely to be fit for here. Never mind the lease,’ I said, with what I took for fine sarcasm. ‘Get on with St. Willibrord, as you seem so fond of that style.’

‘Style!’ cried he, forgetting all his shyness, and bringing his fist down upon the table with an angry bang. ‘Call *that* style! And to think that those inestimable lost books of Livy may be hidden

from the light by trash and rubbish about some wretched St. Willibrord—that they may even be here, under my very hand! Ah, if such a triumph as that were for me—if, like Cardinal Mai, who gave Cicero's "Republic" to the world—But I believe such things are not much in *your* line, Mr. Key.'

So that was Dick Musty's craze. Well, if he liked to waste his time in grubbing under old Latin sermons in the hope of discovering the lost books of Livy, the craze did nobody any harm but himself, but decidedly he was not fit for a lawyer. I told my father the story, thinking it a good joke; but the old gentleman, though the most good-natured man alive, took the matter very differently from what I had expected. He started up and went straight into Dick's room.

'Mr. Thomas'—he always called me Mr. Thomas in the office—'Mr. Thomas tells me, young gentleman,' he broke out, 'that you are reading Latin sermons instead of studying your profession—you, a poor man, who will have to earn your own daily bread with brains of which you haven't an ounce to spare. You're not wasting *my* time; but you gave me a premium to see that you didn't waste your own. And as duty's duty, young gentleman, I'll see that you don't. Old Latin sermons—they're no use here. Give that rubbish to me. I'll lock it up in my own desk, and if I find out that it's nothing but what you say, I'll get rid of it for waste parchment; I won't have such stuff and rubbish lumbering about here. Here, give it to me, without another word. It sha'n't be *my* fault if you choose to waste your time.'

Dick Musty sighed—he even turned pale. But there was no

arguing with my father. The old sermon—for such it was, and nothing more—was duly locked up in my father's desk, and there that matter ended. And I think it proves pretty clearly that Richard Musty was a very odd sort of an articulated clerk indeed. However, it seemed to show that his brain, if addled and muddled by useless studies, was not quite so hopelessly absent as I had hitherto believed.

I had not been back at my own work half an hour, when my father came into my room looking pale and unwell.

'Tom,' he said, 'I had a bad headache when I got up this morning; and instead of getting better, it's been getting worse and worse all day. I'm afraid it made me over-irritable just now when you told me about that young nincompoop of a Musty, and I don't feel like myself at all. I shall go home and lie down, for my head's just splitting. There'll be nothing to-day you can't attend to; I shall be all right to-morrow, I daresay.'

Now my father was a man who had never known what it means to be ill. Still, though a mere headache in his case was a ground for a little anxiety, I was not in the least prepared, when, at the usual hour, I left the office and went home to dinner, to find that my mother had sent for the doctor, who had made my father go to bed at once; and who next morning declared him to be in the first stage of typhoid fever, of which there were several cases about just then. Burgham was not drained so well then as it is now.

I felt the good of having one's head a few years older than one's shoulders when I went to business that morning, and, full of anxiety for my father, sat down at

his table and in his chair, with the whole of the office upon my own hands, and with an unusual amount of heavy and responsible work to be done. My father had been so much in the habit of attending to everything himself, down to the minutest details, while I, on the contrary, had always taken everything so easily, not to say idly, that I was almost painfully nervous about that first day, which was nearly as new a feeling to me as a headache to my father. I hoped that nobody would call. And therefore—need I say it?—I had scarcely opened the last of the office letters before somebody did call—a Mr. Horace Jones. And the name meant nothing to me; for though Miss Jones of the Brambles was a good client of ours, still she had no relation named Horace, and the surname was, in reality, an exceedingly common one.

Enter Mr. Horace Jones, however; and I did not like the looks of him. Not being a professional story-teller, whatever may be said of us lawyers to the contrary and notwithstanding, I will not try to describe him otherwise than by saying that I knew him to be a cad and a blackguard as soon as I set eyes on him. There are men—I have known many of them—who have the art of drinking, gambling, and worse, without turning a hair of their outward respectability; but Mr. Horace Jones was not among them. Drunkard, gambler, and worse was written from the crown of his hat to the ends of his toes. And in such a case a man finds it hard to be taken for a gentleman.

'Who are you, sir?' he asked roughly. 'I called to see *old* Mr. Key.'

'If you mean my father,' said I, in as dignified a manner as I could, 'I am sorry to say he is

very unwell, and may not be able to leave his house for some time. If it is anything to which I can attend, I am his partner, and—'

'O! Well, you'll do, I daresay. For that matter, you *must* do; for mine's business that won't keep, I can tell you. Got a cocktail handy? No? Precious lot you English lawyers— So the old un's kicked the bucket at last, I hear. Wish to—Hades I'd known it before. Well, never too late for that sort of thing. So the sooner you get things fixed, young man, the better for you.'

'It seems to me, Mr. Jones, that you have made some mistake,' said I.

'Mistake! Do you mean to say you don't know *me*? Well, I suppose when a man has been away from his native home twenty-seven years about the world, he does get changed, more or less, and can't, when I come to think of it, expect to be recognised all at once by them that weren't born when he went away. But—mistake! Don't *you* be mistaken, young man. So old Jones of the Brambles has gone under the daisies—that's what I mean.'

'Mr. Jones of the Brambles? Why, he died three years ago. You can't possibly have any claim on the estate now.'

'Three years ago? Three times three times three—twenty-seven years ago. More fool I not to have found it out ages ago! I broke the old cove's heart, I believe. Rum things some hearts must be, to be sure. And as for having no claim—Oho! Old Jones of the Brambles, that died twenty-seven years back, was my father; and I'm young Jones, old Jones's son. Twig now?'

Was the fellow mad or drunk? thought I. Certainly he was right in saying that a Mr. Jones of the Brambles had died twenty-seven

years ago. But that was long ago, according to something more important than years. That was when the Brambles, near Burgham, was nothing better than an old farmhouse on the edge of a large rough piece of moorland which was collectively known by that appropriate name. But Mr. Jones the first's son was dead too, as I had said, three years ago; and Mr. Jones the second had died when the Brambles—

But, as this is a legal story, I shall make no apology for entering into the history of a title, not only because it is absolutely essential, but because it is exceptionally simple and easy to follow. Indeed, the whole point of the story depends upon its absolute freedom from complications and questions of every sort and kind.

The Brambles, then, otherwise called Easton Field, was a farm just beyond the last dwelling-house in the High-street of Burgham; that is to say, the continuity of the High-street ends abruptly at its eastern end, and the open country begins at once, without any shading off of villas and cottages as is usual even in smaller towns, and as is the case at the street's western extremity. I am now, of course, speaking of the Brambles—as Easton Field was always commonly called—as it was when I was quite a child, and when its clumps and patches of heather and thorny bottoms were the playground of the town. Indeed, it must have been a sort of town playground in quite ancient times, for there was a broad flat meadow still called 'the Butts' from days long before those of the rifle volunteers. This rather non-descript tract had belonged to Welwood Priory, and, that being dissolved, had gone to one of the colleges—I forget which—in the University of Oxford. It was

valueless as land; for building space was then practically worthless at a place like Burgham, though the case would be very different now; and to turn it to agricultural purposes would have required an exceedingly large capital, with very little prospect of a speedy return. I should say its net annual value to the Oxford college might have been as much as five or six pounds a year.

But there happened to be in Burgham, about fifty years before the time of my story, an uncommonly sharp fellow, a land surveyor, of the name of John Jones. I think he must have been the cleverest fellow that was ever born in Burgham. Anyhow, he bought the whole interest of the Oxford college in the land for a mere song, let a part of it to a neighbouring farmer for some trifle or other, and left his son, Wilfred Jones, a—coal-field.

Wilfred Jones was not sharp in the sense that his father had been. He was a splendid fellow; not grasping, not pushing, but a man of tremendous perseverance and energy. He was the king of Burgham when I was young, and he deserved to be. Instead of the Brambles being a fringe of Burgham, Burgham became a suburb of the Brambles. I must describe no farther, lest I should point too distinctly to real names. The Brambles became a great estate in next to no time; and it brought the railway to Burgham, and the railway helped it on at its own speed. The old farmhouse in the corner grew into a park and mansion. I can remember, better than yesterday, how the whole town was thrown into a kind of collapse when Wilfred Jones of the Brambles—he would stick to the old local name—died at the early age of seven-and-forty—no more. Every man, woman, and child in

the place had lost a private as well as a public friend. My father drew his will, which left everything he had (except certain large legacies which the estate could well afford) to his only child, Miss Margaret Jones, now—at the time of which I write—a charmingly pretty and amiable girl of three-and-twenty. She was the greatest heiress in the county, bar none; and the county people thought as much of her as if she had come in with King William the Conqueror, instead of, as my father used to say, with old King Coal.

Somehow, I never now seem to see girls as pretty or as nice as Miss Margaret. Every man in the town was—at a humble and respectful distance—in love with her; and, what is really the strangest thing in my whole story, so were all the women too. She was wonderfully like her father (her mother had died at her birth) in a feminine way. There was a sort of public anxiety as to if, when, and whom, she would marry—not that there was so much question about the ‘if’ as the ‘whom.’ It would be a misfortune for all Burgham if, as clever and charming girls who are their own mistresses have a particular knack of doing, she married wrong. Well, for a wonder she had taken it into her head and her heart to choose as wisely as her own mother had chosen before her. Mr. Evelyn Viner was only a younger son of one of the best—but not the best-off—families in the county; and no doubt Miss Margaret’s hand would be an excellent thing for him. But nobody, somehow, ever looked upon him in the light of a fortune-hunter; and you may be sure there were plenty of people who would be ready enough to do it if he were. In fact, he was the most popular

man in the county, and the most deservedly so; and that he and she should make a match of it was as natural as that he should represent Burgham in Parliament on the first opportunity.

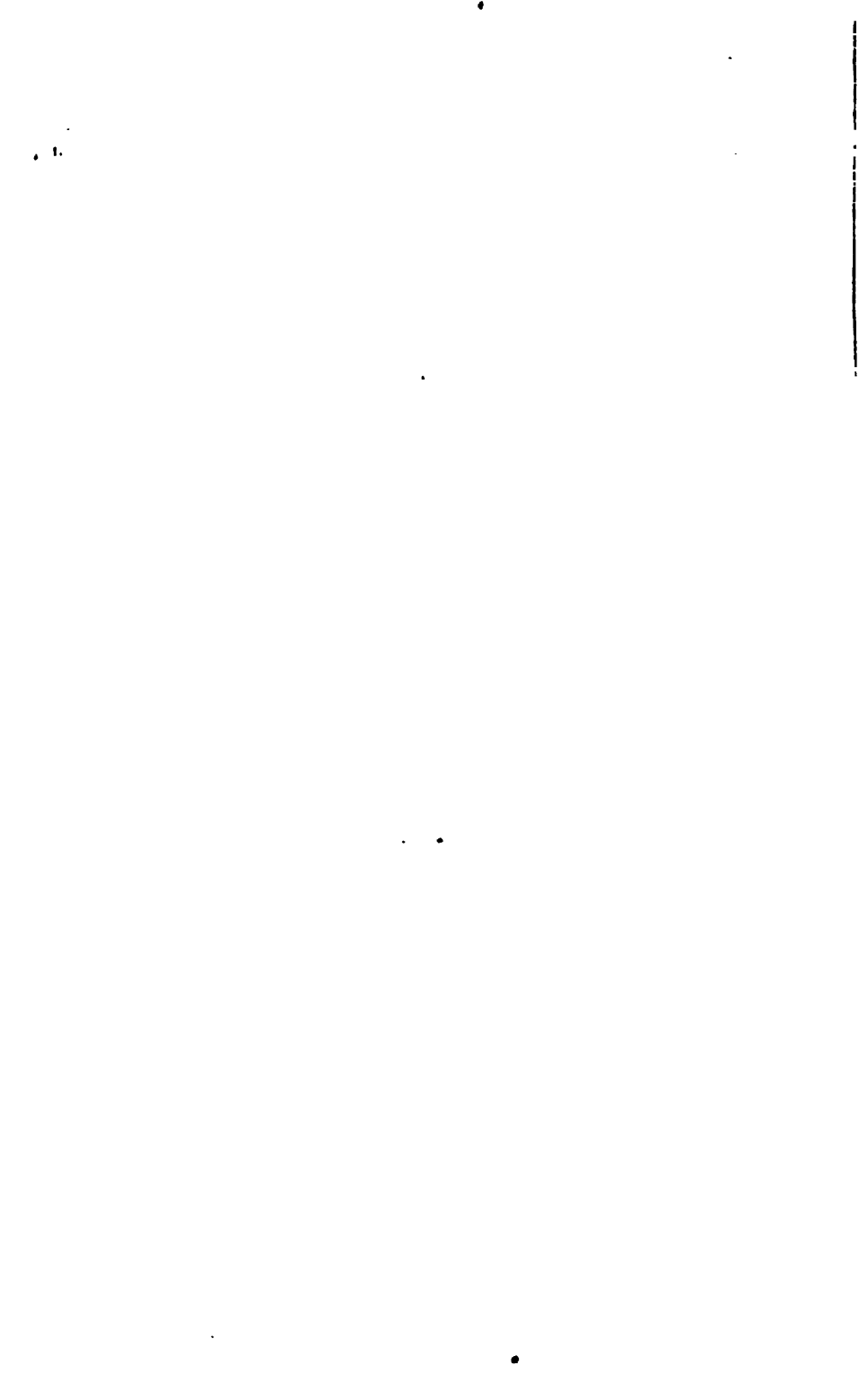
I should have mentioned—the matter is of some importance for critical readers, though the general reader may skip over this paragraph without any risk to the thread of the story—that, until the time of Mr. Wilfred Jones, nobody had lived on the Brambles but two or three cottagers, who were tenants from year to year at a rent of about forty shillings per annum, and that it was rated and so forth to the parish of St. Botolph’s in Turn—the very singular name of a parish which, like some others in England, had no parish church, the people mostly making use of that at the village of Welwood, where the priory had been in old times. Miss Margaret herself used to go to Welwood church, like her father before her. Don’t let anybody, however, who has no special local knowledge try to make use of ‘St. Botolph’s in Turn’ for a key; for I have taken infinite pains to manufacture a name which will suit my purpose just as well as the real one, while it does not resemble it in a single leading letter. What it meant, nobody in Burgham knew—or, for that matter, cared to know.

So, striking out all my digressions, Miss Margaret’s title to that great mine of wealth called the Brambles was this, and it was as clear as day. She took it both under her father’s will and as his heir-at-law; her father had taken it from *his* father as heir-at-law; he, John Jones, had bought it from an Oxford college that had held it for more than two hundred years.

What could my visitor mean—



A VERY UNDESIRABLE CLIENT.



unless drunk, or mad, or both in one?

'No,' said I, 'I do *not* twig now.'

'And that's Fame!' said he. 'Well. I'm not going to be long-winded; for I'm dry. I've come to you because, in the first place, your firm's got a good name about here, and a good name's the thing I want more than anything; and because, as our family lawyers, you'll see things without bother. Here you are, then. I'm the son of old John Jones—'

'I see. You died three years ago, and now you've come to life again with a new Christian name; and I can't say you're much the better for the company you've been keeping in the other world. Well?

'You mean my travels have made me rough and ready, eh? So they have—ready for everything I can get, too. Pocket as dry as my throat; and no wonder. But, hang it, young man, I'm not used to being told so; and I wouldn't risk losing a good job, if I were you. I'm Horace Jones, eldest son of old John Jones of the Brambles. Well, you see, the old boy and I didn't hit it off together very well. He was a slow old coach, and I wasn't a slow young un. He was a skinflint, too; and, you wouldn't believe it, but the unnatural old villain put me to such shifts that I actually had to take the king's shilling; and I took means to let him think I'd died of yellow fever in Barbadoes, just to prevent him making a new will and cutting me off with another. I've knocked about since then, here and there; but I've been a confounded unlucky sort of a devil, I must say. I'm a married man, too, and a family man; four of 'em, Mr. Key, with a mother I wouldn't live with another hour if it wasn't that she

keeps things going while I'm waiting for things to mend. Now the question is, what do I come in for, eh? I'm thinking of taking a public down Deptford way. Mrs. Jones was in that line when I first knew her; and I want capital, and the more the merrier. What's the figure? Three figures? Maybe four?'

What was I to say? If this fellow were telling the truth, it was not a capital of three figures or four figures, but an estate bringing in an annual income of five figures, to which he, a broken-down shameless drunkard, with a barmaid for a wife, was heir-at-law. For John Jones, having only his son Wilfred to follow him, and little but the then undeveloped Brambles to leave, had *not* made a will. Yes, and if there were a grain of truth at the bottom of the man's story, if he were not an impostor from first to last, the great estate would be no longer Miss Margaret's; it would no more be a blessing to the country; it would no longer give a fit career to a man like Evelyn Viner; it would no longer be a fountain of charity and honour; it would no longer be—But why say what it would *not* be? It would, it must, in this man's hands, become a curse and a ruin.

The worst of it was, that the story was only too likely to be true. If Wilfred Jones had ever had an elder brother—of whom it was likely enough that I myself should never have heard—it would be notorious in an elder generation, and nobody would dare to invent the existence of a non-existent man. Again, this Mr. Horace Jones had evidently no idea of the extent and value of the property to which he was laying claim. He would not, unless preternaturally cunning, talk so simply about it, as if at most it could

only be a few thousand pounds. I did what I still think was the most prudent thing. I sent out for a bottle of whisky, and told him to wait until I returned from some business that had to be attended to immediately. Ill as my father was, this was a matter that I must consult him upon, and that instantly. I did not venture to mention the matter even to our old managing clerk, for fear lest even our office-walls should have ears, or a little bird should be sitting on the window-sill to carry the matter.

'Good God!' exclaimed my father, starting up in bed; 'you don't tell me that Horace Jones is alive, after all? Yes, Tom, there *was* such a man. And he *did* break his father's heart when he enlisted—though going for a soldier was the most decent thing I ever heard of his doing. And he *did* die—at least, so the poor old gentleman believed; and old John Jones did *not* make a will. And—and, Tom—if this is the man, the Brambles is his, as sure as it's law that when a man dies intestate his real property goes to his heir. Poor girl! But it can't, Tom; I say it *shan't* be true! I'll get up this minute—I'll—'

'I must go back to him. What shall I say to him?'

'Yes, Tom; I *am* too ill. I don't know. He must prove his identity up to the hilt, that's clear. If he does, perhaps he'll accept a compromise. But then he says he's married. Tom, this case must be fought, tooth and nail. I hate tricks; but, hang it, Tom, there's nothing I wouldn't do to keep the Brambles for little Peggy, Mrs. Viner that is to be. Well, you go to him, say nothing about the value of the estate, and tell him to prove every word he has said to you. And get his address, and put the detectives on

him up in town. Don't let him think you're nervous, Tom. Be cool, and don't admit that two and two are four.'

When I went back to the office, I found half the whisky gone; but the man still there. I hope I acted coolly; at any rate, I committed myself to nothing, gave no information, and told Mr. Horace Jones that I should require clear proof of his identity before taking any further steps in the matter. I lent him a guinea, for the sake of keeping my eye on him till I saw him off by the next train.

The story worried my father dreadfully; though I don't know how I, in my own ignorance of all the circumstances, could possibly have kept it from him. As for myself, I instantly wrote up to a friend of my own in London—a young solicitor with nothing to do, but as sharp as a needle, and with a passion for investigation—to go to work in a private capacity, and to let me know all he could find out about the man who called himself Horace Jones, and who said he lived at—let me say, 36 Belvidere-gardens, Clerkenwell. I had not heard again from the man himself. But I had best give my friend's report of him in his words.

'Dear Key,—Belvidere-gardens is a back slum, a sort of mews. No. 36 is a small barber's. I have been shaved there; and Mr. Potts is not only a very small but a very clumsy barber. I should say a good deal of drink went on at 36 Belvidere-gardens. Mr. Horace Jones lodges there. I had some conversation with him. He says he is a gentleman kept out of an immense property by an ungrateful niece and some swindling pettifoggers; but that he is in right hands, and means to have the law of them all. I "lent" him

half a crown, for new acquaintance's sake. I judge him to be a man who is always half drunk, and could never, under any circumstance, be otherwise. His wife—if he be more than half married as well as less than half sober—is a lady of colour, who, I believe, has followed a regiment in her time. I believe that sometimes she beats him, and sometimes he her. She has been the breadwinner hitherto in some capacity—in what I can't precisely learn—he doing little but lounge about at bars. But for the last week or so they have been flush of money, and done nothing but quarrel. They have paid Mr. Potts some arrears of board and lodging. The less I say of their four children—two boys and two girls—the better. It is bad to think of them. They are Horace John, aged twelve; Margaret, eleven; Amelia, nine; and Adolphus, seven. Your friend goes by the name, in the Gardens, of "Gentleman" Jones; I am absolutely unable to imagine why. I hope you are satisfied. I am so much so that I don't want to go to Belvidere-gardens again. The man is *not* mad, unless you spell "Mad" with a B. But he is, I am convinced, as incapable of anything bad on a *large* scale as he is of anything good on any scale at all. He is the very type of a half-crown rogue.'

The time went by, until at last I began to flatter myself that nothing more was going to happen, and that Mr. Horace Jones had been nothing but a scarecrow, whose only object had been to bewilder a lawyer out of a guinea. But after a calm comes—what we know.

It was Mr. Evelyn Viner himself who came one day into my office with a letter.

'What, in the name of impu-

dence, is the meaning of this?' asked he.

The storm had broken at last. It was a letter from a highly respectable legal firm in London to Miss Jones herself, asking her to name an attorney who would receive for her notice of a declaration in ejectment, according to the old procedure. What did it mean? Simply that Mr. Horace Jones had persuaded a respectable firm of his identity and of his right—no doubt backed by counsel's opinion—of his right to the Brambles as heir-at-law to John Jones; that he had found out for himself the value of the estate; and that he meant to take no compromise and give no quarter. Indeed there was no earthly reason why he should, if his story were true.

And this was what I had to explain to Mr. Evelyn Viner, and to Miss Margaret, through him.

II.

I COULD scarcely summon up courage to face my father, though I had no reason for feeling that I had committed any blunder. Everything was perfectly straightforward and fair. So busy was I with reviewing the whole situation—surely the most important, short of life and death, that ever fell into a lawyer's hands—that I took no heed of the usual hour for closing. It was a terrible responsibility, this case of the Brambles; and, unless we could carry it into court, and cross-examine Horace Jones into his grave in Barbadoes, the Brambles must pass out of the worthiest hands into those of these vermin. I believe that law and justice almost invariably agree, or at least that they used to before law became the chaos of bungled statutes that it is now; but I could not feel so

then. If only old John Jones had not, out of some imbecile faith in the return of a prodigal, I suppose, been such a confounded ass as to have made no will!

It was dark when I remembered that I had not dined. And that made me notice, as I went out into the passage, that there was a light shining from under the room where we kept our articulated clerk and other lumber. I went in; and Dick Musty must have been as surprised to see me there at that hour as I was to see him, for he started and flushed up just as he had done once before.

'What on earth are you doing here?' I asked. 'I'm going to lock up—of course you can sleep here if you please;' which, of course, I did not mean.

'I—I had been getting interested in Blackstone,' said he. 'I didn't notice the time.'

I noticed that he was certainly reading, and was pleased to think that the young fellow was at any rate trying not to waste his time. Indeed, to be interested in Blackstone was more than I had ever been in the days of *my* articles. I felt sure that, if it had not been for this terrible affair of the Brambles, it would have pleased my father also, who wished the young man well. It may seem odd that I should bring so slight an incident as this into my story; but it struck me at the time that the fact of Dick Musty's keeping away from his lodgings and his Greek and his Latin to read law in our lumber-room was stranger even than Horace Jones's return from the grave.

My father, though better, was still very weak; but he could never rest at night until I had told him everything about the day's work, so that I could not put the last piece of bad news off till to-morrow.

'We must have counsel to plead to the declaration and advise,' said he, without one word of courage. 'Go to the Brambles to-morrow and see poor Miss Peggy, and tell her not to be down-hearted, poor girl. Try and look cheerful, Tom. If we are to lose, we'll lose hard. Of course you'll see that she instructs you. Let me see—if it comes to the assizes, we'll have Markham—send him a retainer at once, before the other side can get him. And I'll tell you what—you shall go to London and see Winter himself about the pleadings. There's no living man better. Hang the costs! If we can't get them from the other side, we'll do without 'em, Tom. Miss Peggy sha'n't be a penny the poorer for me. Tom, this isn't a private case. It's a public cause.'

My poor father, though as good a man of business as ever stepped, had, I always used to think, a good deal of the knight-errant about him for a sober attorney. I could see he knew it was a losing fight from the very beginning; but—well, I suppose, like every other man in Burgham, myself included, he was in love with Miss Peggy Jones. At any rate, I sympathised with his reckless scorn of costs in such a cause, and half wished I had the moral courage to forge a long-lost will to checkmate the long-lost heir.

I went over to the Brambles next day and found Miss Margaret very grave and quiet and calm. I had expected to find her in so very different a mood, that I knew not what to say.

'I hear you told Mr. Viner yesterday that I ought to defend this case,' said she. 'On what ground? Do you really suppose it is an impostor, and not my uncle Horace, who has put forward this claim? On your honour, Mr. Key, do you believe that my uncle

is dead, and that some person has falsely assumed his name ?

I could not play with the truth before such straight true eyes as hers.

'I cannot tell you what I think,' said I. 'But I know, as my father says too, that he must prove himself up to the hilt, that's all.'

'No. If he makes me believe it, that must be enough for me. I must not leave it to judges and juries to tell me what I ought to do. And I do believe him to be my uncle, my own father's brother, Horace Jones.'

'Good Heaven !' I exclaimed, 'you *cannot* mean that you will, without the strictest proof, let your father's land go to such a man, to such a woman ; that you will throw away all your own happiness, all the good and welfare of your native town—'

'My *own* happiness will not suffer, thank God !' said she, with a grave smile that told me how well she had learned that her future husband's love did not hang one jot upon house or land ; and I wished that Evelyn Viner were by, that I might take his hand and tell him, in the name of the whole town, that he was worthy to be the husband of even Margaret Jones, rich or poor. I suppose they had talked it over yesterday, and had decided what was right for them to do, like a couple of fools. 'Of course I am sorry if my uncle is not likely to prove so good a neighbour as we—I—should have tried to be. But Justice is Justice, Mr. Key, and I cannot try to keep what is not my own.'

'It is *not* Justice,' said I, and I am of the same opinion still. 'Your grandfather believed his eldest son dead. He meant your father to have the Brambles. Why should he have made a will ?'

'How do we know that he

believed my uncle dead ?' asked she.

'Because he made no will.' But that was bad logic, and I knew it when I said so. 'Madam, you *must* compel this man to prove himself your uncle to the satisfaction of all England. It is your duty as your father's daughter ; your duty to all Burgham,' said I. She sighed.

'I want to do my duty,' said she. 'And you, and your father, want to help me to do it, I know. Please do not stand in my way.'

'At least, Miss Jones, allow my father to be satisfied that he is the man he claims to be. We have no evidence at all—'

'Moral evidence,' said she, 'and to spare.'

'Moral rubbish !' I am afraid I exclaimed. 'Let us be convinced a little more than morally ; we will not work against justice, you may be sure. That is due to us, because we are your friends.'

'I know that,' said she.

'We must plead to this declaration within a certain time. Authorise me to do that for you—that will commit you to nothing ; and meanwhile we will satisfy ourselves whether it is necessary that the Brambles should be the property of an—Uncle. Only give us time, in order that *we* may be sure.'

'I think there can be no harm in that,' said she, though I could see the impulse was upon her to leave the Brambles that very hour. 'Of course it is right for our friends to know that we are not doing wrong in what we do. And no doubt our uncle's title, for his children's sake, ought to be made clear.'

She was using Queen's grammar ; but I knew what she meant by her 'We' and 'Our' very well.

To fight a lost battle is bad enough ; but to fight it for a

client who is determined to lose is harder still. However, I had to be content with the very limited power I was allowed, only taking care to strain it as far as possible. I at once sent a retainer to Serjeant Markham, who then led our circuit, though pretty certain that the fee was thrown away. Then I set hard to work upon instructions for Mr. Winter to plead and advise, more particularly upon the evidence that would be required. Mr. Winter was the great pleader of the day. As we had no intention of getting our costs, we might indulge in any expense we pleased, and lose with a flourish and with all the honours of war.

It was of course exceedingly inconvenient that I, in my father's state of health, should be up in town and away from the office for even a day or two. But there was no help for it. Such a case demanded our most extreme personal attention, and my father would not be satisfied without a conference with Mr. Winter. Happily, we had no other business on hand that was immediately pressing. So I left our managing clerk in charge; arranged that all letters and clients who could not be put off should be brought or sent to my father at his house; gave Musty, for form's sake, a lot of work that would keep for many months, with strict injunctions to let me find it finished by my return; and travelled up to London.

I must own that Messrs. Heath & Crane, who were the claimant's attorneys, met me in the most open and straightforward manner. They concealed nothing, and showed no symptom of wishing to take us by surprise. They were not even anxious that Miss Jones should give up the Brambles without fighting; on the contrary, they seemed to wish for a verdict, so as to establish their client's

title beyond any possibility of future cavil.

'If you are holding out in order that we may make Miss Jones an offer to induce her to spare us the expense of a trial, I may as well tell you at once that you are mistaken,' said Mr. Crane. 'We are as sure of a verdict as I stand here. I may assume, between ourselves, that you are not going to put in a will; and I know that my client's identity is beyond question. We shall most assuredly make no sort of offer whatever; we shall not advise our client to make one; and, even if we did advise it, it would not be made. Our client, rightly or wrongly, considers himself to have been grossly ill-used; and, rightly or wrongly, sees no reason why Miss Margaret Jones deserves one penny from him. If he chooses to do anything for her afterwards, that is his own affair. But he certainly will not buy her out. The proofs of identity are freely at your service, and you are welcome to make the most of them. If you think it worth while to put us to strict proof, you will find us fully prepared.'

I smiled at the idea of Miss Margaret's taking a penny for giving up even what was her own, much less anything that was not her own. I knew too well that, with her, it must be all or nothing; and that she would, as a matter of course, refuse any imaginable compromise. However, I committed myself to nothing, and completed my instructions for counsel to advise on evidence after examining the claimant's case of identity at my leisure. Alas, his case was only too clear! For any good I could do in London, I might just as well take the next train to Burgham.

However, my father would never forgive me if I came back without having done my best—

I believe the dear old gentleman would have dissolved partnership with any man who was clever enough to know when he was beaten. The worst of it was, that a conference with Mr. Winter was almost as difficult to obtain as an interview with Royalty. After a world of importunate patience, till I expect his clerk nearly hated the sight of me, I obtained an appointment for a quarter-past eleven o'clock at night at his private house in Russell-square. I was punctual to the minute, you may be sure; and I found the great junior busily engaged in reading a—novel. It seemed as incongruous as finding Dick Musty over Blackstone. But I have become more used to incongruities since those days.

'Wait a moment—I must know whether that poor girl really did die of a broken heart,' said he, turning rapidly over the pages. 'Ah, yes. Well, never mind. Better luck next time, Mr.—ah, yes—Key. Well, Mr. Key, there is no doubt but that the intestate's eldest son is entitled to recover on the strength of his own title as heir-at-law. And there's no question, it seems, of his title's being barred by length of adverse possession; and if there were, it would not apply to a claimant who has been beyond the seas till so short a time ago. Unless you can set up a will—'

'No. There was no will.'

'Or deny that the intestate was seized—'

'We should not think of doing that, even if we could, Mr. Winter.'

'Or that he was not married to the claimant's mother when the claimant was born—'

'Out of the question. His marriage will be amply proved.'

'Then, why, in the name of

common sense, Mr. Key, do you come to me?'

'For this reason. To be advised whether they have evidence enough that the claimant is really Horace Jones, and not some other man.'

'Ah, that's another pair of shoes! Put them to the proof of that, if you can. What do they say?'

'I'm afraid their case is—well, rather strong. They can show, and we can't deny, that Horace Jones enlisted in a certain regiment of the line. They have evidence, military and medical, that he was ill with yellow fever at Barbadoes, and did *not* die. They will call the former chaplain and the surgeons and some officers of the regiment, to carry the case so far. That he married a woman of colour—a suttler-woman—will be shown in the same way; as well as that the Horace Jones they knew belonged to Burgham; and to that they have witnesses from Burgham too. And every witness concerned will swear to the identity of Horace Jones the claimant with either Horace Jones of Burgham, or with Horace Jones in Barbadoes; and to the identity of Mrs. Horace Jones here with the woman who married Horace Jones out there.'

'Have you any evidence that all these witnesses—excellent witnesses, as I gather from what you say—are in unanimous error, and that the claimant is *not* Horace Jones? What do his alleged relations say?'

'I am sorry to say that we have no evidence at all. And his only relation is my client, who—well, Mr. Winter, she is a lady with a most remarkable sense of justice, and—'

'On what, then, *do* you rely?'

'On the chance that the claimant, when he comes to be cross-

examined, might break down. We have retained Serjeant Markham—'

'Who knows how to puzzle the devil himself about his own identity. True. I daresay he could puzzle even me about mine. But jurors, let me tell you, are not quite the puzzle-headed fools that it is the fashion to call them. They will most assuredly believe the chaplain, and the surgeons, and the officers, and the good witnesses from Burgham. They will believe your client's silence, and your own inability to show who the man is, if he be not Horace Jones. And in this belief the judge will direct them to remain. And Serjeant Markham is the last man at the Bar to make a fool of himself, as you, Mr. Key, seem bent upon instructing him to do. If he does cross-examine the claimant, he will practically throw up his brief as soon as he sits down. Your client has no case, Mr. Key, absolutely none. Good-night, Mr. Key.'

In my own mind, I had foreseen what Mr. Winter's advice would be; and I even felt conscious that it was a case in which his want of courtesy had been exceedingly excusable. He, unlike us, was not a Burgham man, and had had no opportunity of falling in love with Miss Margaret Jones. He had taken the view of a man of sense; and his view was final. We simply had not a leg, not even a toe, to stand on. Poor Miss Margaret must lose every penny she had, her husband must work for his bread, and the Brambles must go to Mr. and Mrs. Horace Jones and their gutter-children after them; to a drunken scamp and a Mulatto camp-follower. I need not dwell upon what that would mean.

With a heavy heart next morn-

ing I called at Mr. Winter's chambers in the Temple, and paid his clerk his easily earned fee for answering what he must have thought a fool's question. Then I looked up my friend who had sent me the report on the manners and customs of Mr. Horace Jones, and then took the train to Burgham. It is not a short journey, though I need not specify the number of miles or hours; and, for that matter, railways were neither so fast nor so dangerous as they are now. So it was late in the afternoon when I reached Burgham, and I went to the office before I went home, in order to put off for a few minutes telling my father all the bad news.

'I want to speak to you, Mr. Thomas,' said the managing clerk, as soon as I arrived.

'Well, Merrit? I hope it's nothing wrong?'

'No, sir, it can't be anything wrong. But it's queer. Every day you've been gone, I've shut up the office at the usual hour. You know, sir, we always lock all our own doors; so the housekeeper herself, if she wanted to, couldn't get in without asking for the key. And she never has asked me, and I've never parted with our keys for a single minute from the breeches-pocket where I keep them, and where I've got them now. Well, Mr. Thomas, I was out late one evening, having tea at my sister's, and my way home lay past the office-door. Naturally, I looked up, and there was a light shining through the window of your father's room as clear as I see you now.'

'Well?'

'At first I thought it must be fire or thieves. So I rang up the housekeeper, and we looked into all the rooms, and there we found—'

'What?'

'Nothing, sir. Everything was dark and quiet, just as if there'd been no light at all.'

'Your sister makes her tea strong, I suppose. That all?'

'It's all very well to have your joke, Mr. Thomas, and of course the steadiest of men may see wrong once in a way; but that's not all. I was so sure I'd seen that light in that window, that I made a point of going to my sister's next night too, so that I might see if it happened again.'

'Well? Did it happen again?'

'Yes, Mr. Thomas. It *did* happen again. And I woke up the housekeeper again. And we found nothing again. And when I went back into the street there wasn't the ghost of a light to be seen. So it couldn't have been the reflection of anything, you see.'

'And you found, in the morning, not a sign of anybody's having been in the room?'

'Not the shadow of a sign. And, sir, that isn't all. Every night I've passed by—I've made a point of it before turning in—and every time I've seen that light, except the last one or two. I can't make it out at all. And the odd thing is, there's nothing wrong.'

'Have you told my father?'

'No, sir. He's seemed so worried and nervous that I didn't like to trouble him. I thought best to wait till you came home.'

'Quite right. My father must not be worried any more just now. Well, Merrit, I've been thinking some time you ought to have a holiday. Go to the sea for a week. We can manage that, now I'm back again.' The man worked hard, and it was as likely as not that his brain might want resting. 'Has anybody seen the light besides you?'

'I haven't asked, sir. I've been afraid, Mr. Thomas—in fact—'

'In fact, you suspect something you don't like to tell. What is it, please?'

'Your father is unquestionably in a nervous condition, Mr. Thomas. I've noticed that ever since you've been gone. And sometimes people in that state do very curious things. So I thought it best to wait till you were back again.'

'You mean that my father—impossible! My mother would know. Put that out of your head at once, Merrit, if you please. All the same, you've done quite right to wait for me. Yes; you ought to take a holiday, I'm sure. Anyhow, there's nothing wrong, it seems. Nothing but a common ghost, I suppose; I don't mind *them*. And how has Mr. Musty been getting on all this while, eh? Not much use to you, I suppose?'

'I'm altering my opinion of Mr. Musty, Mr. Thomas, I am indeed. He's been working like a pavior. He's here before I am in the morning, and stays as long as I'll let him. I believe there's stuff in that young man, though it's been long enough coming out, I must say.'

'I must see my father now. We'll talk to-morrow about your holiday.'

My mother's account of my father was by no means a good one. He had been going backward instead of forward, and was, the doctors suspected, kept down by some mental trouble. He was morbidly anxious about letters, and altogether as different from his old easy-going self as a man could be. She did not wish me to see him that night; but he had heard my voice—he had gone to bed early—and sent for me. When I had told him all my news, he said sadly,

'For the first time in my life I see we're beat, my boy. Winter's right. We're only a couple of obstinate fools. Poor girl! Well, God will temper the wind. But it's bad to feel beat, very bad indeed.'

'Has father been at all strange?' I asked my mother.

'Only in the way you have seen,' said she. 'He is not like himself; but that is all.'

So unlike himself that I began anxiously to wonder whether there might not be something in Merrit's suspicions, and that my father, in some mysterious way and without my mother's knowledge, might not be paying some nightly visit to the office, of which he had another set of keys. People with minds out of gear manage to do things sometimes that healthy persons would find impossible.

III.

AFTER supper I strolled out with a cigar to settle in my own mind about what ought to be done, and how I should let Miss Margaret know that she was henceforth without a penny in the world of her own, unless she chose to beg for charity from Mr. and Mrs. Horace Jones. My only comfort was that she would bear to hear the news a great deal better than I could bear to tell it to her. In our last interview she had shown me the sort of stuff of which she and Evelyn Viner were composed; and that made it all the worse to exchange such neighbours for Mr. and Mrs. Horace Jones. I loved my father dearly, and was terribly anxious about him; but the immediate trouble of the hour, on which the fortune of a whole town seemed to hang, was all-absorbing. And besides, it was the first serious matter in which I had ever been engaged;

and I could not help asking myself a hundred times a minute, if I had neglected any loophole of escape which greater knowledge and experience might have been able to find. But there was none, absolutely none. My Lord Chief Justice would have been as hopeless as I. Mr. Winter had as good as told me I was a fool for clutching at what was not even so much as a straw.

Poets are not the only people who, when they are in a professional difficulty, stare up at the stars. I did. I was in the lane which led from the High-street, past our office-door, into St. Michael's-yard, when I looked up towards the Great Bear, and saw—a light in the window of my father's room.

My first impulse was to go home, and see if my father was safe in his room. But on second thoughts I felt it better to wait a little, and then to effect an entrance with more effect than Mr. Merrit had done. Putting the idea of thieves out of the question, the occupant of the room must either be the housekeeper or my father. If the housekeeper, she certainly had no business there, and must be taken by surprise. If my father, he must be dealt with very carefully indeed. So I waited for five minutes, to see if the light was likely to vanish of its own accord, and then, instead of ringing the housekeeper's bell, I bethought me of an old trick which, I am sorry to say, I had not unfrequently put in practice when a younger man, in order to get in and out of the office when I wanted my temporary absence to be unknown. Without much, though with some, risk of feeling the hand of a passing constable on my shoulder, I climbed over the old coped wall that divided St. Michael's-yard from our

back premises, then pulled myself on to another wall, and thence, very easily, to the cover of a closed cistern which was under my own window. I did not make much noise, and there was enough wind about to cover any that I could not help making. Then I took out my pocket-knife, and, by a trick not unknown to schoolboys and house-breakers, and in which former practice had made me expert in relation to this particular window, passed it between the upper and lower window-frames, pressed back the very inefficient fastening, and had the window open in less time than it has taken me to write the words. Then I took off my boots, dropped them quietly into the room, and followed them. I had no light; but I knew every inch of the ground. My door was locked, but Merrit had given me up the keys. I went out into the passage, in the dark and in my stockings, and listened at my father's door. I did not hear a sound.

I made up my mind that the best thing I could do was to open it quietly, enter in a matter-of-course way, and if, as impossibility itself could not keep me from fearing, I found my father, make believe that there was nothing out of the way in the situation. I would simply ask him if he did not think it time to shut up the office and come home. So I pulled back the outer door of green baize, and opened the inner, and at first, coming so suddenly out of the pitch darkness, was too dazzled by the candle-light to understand clearly what I saw. The candle had not gone out when I came in.

It was not, thank God, my father, haunting his office at midnight in a state of over-strung nerves. It was not the house-keeper, who ought to be in bed and asleep, and was no doubt do-

ing her duty. It was Richard Musty—Richard Musty, sitting at midnight at my father's table, in my father's chair, with a candle before him, and half his face buried in his hands.

Had *he* gone crazed? But I did not think of that then. The possibility of crime was more in my mind. I went up to him and brought my hand down heavily between his shoulders.

'What the devil,' I cried out, 'are you doing here?'

Most decidedly I meant to startle him. But I could not possibly startle him more than he had startled me, when I found out who it was that had been, night after night, engaged alone in an office which he could not possibly have been able to enter without false keys, or with any honest cause. He could not even have practised my mode of entry without false keys, because I had had to unlock my own room-door, and had not had to unlock my father's. And he of all men—too much of a blockhead even to be a rogue, as I had imagined until now. But though it was natural for him to be less startled than I, he did not seem to be startled at all.

On the contrary, he merely turned round and faced me with the saddest, most hopeless look I had ever seen.

'I did not expect you,' was all he said. 'But it doesn't matter now.'

'Not matter?' said I. 'Not matter, that I find my father's office broken into, night after night, by one of his own clerks; not matter, that I find you out in what amounts to burglary? If you have anything to say for yourself, say it; if not, I shall know what to believe, and make a proper search for an explanation, both here and elsewhere.'

'I have nothing to say, Mr.

Key,' said he. 'Of course I shall not appear in your office again.'

'I could have told you that myself,' said I. 'Then you have nothing to say? Well, my father must decide what to do with you. I know what I should do.' I was not keeping my temper, I own. 'I suppose I oughtn't to cross-examine you, but I must either do that or send for the police, it seems to me. And for your mother's sake I should like to avoid that, if I can.'

'Then—then I will tell you,' said he. 'Perhaps, perhaps I have done what a lawyer, a mere lawyerlike yourself, would call wrong, technically wrong. I am not a mere lawyer, Mr. Key.'

'A mere lawyer? I never knew you were a lawyer at all,' said I. 'But unluckily it is mere lawyers who have to define burglary, and—'

'I am not a burglar!' said Musty, showing a little spirit for the first time. 'I have been here every night, that is true. It was the only time at which I could have sufficient access to your father's room. But my means of access were not what you suppose. I never used to leave the premises,—that is all. Before the hour for closing I used to hide in that closet, which your father's absence from the office made it perfectly easy for me to do. Mr. Merrit and the clerks of course used to think I had gone away for the day. Your father's room-door was never really locked, for I suppose it was forgotten either when he was taken ill or else when you went away, and nobody ever thought of it afterwards, not even Mr. Merrit, though he used to find the door unlocked whenever he came at night. It's curious what stupid people some lawyers are. Just because it was supposed not to want locking at the

right time, nobody seemed to think it odd that it was found unlocked at the wrong one. No mere metaphysician would have made such a blunder as that, Mr. Key. I used to think it lucky. It enabled me to be found at my own desk when the clerks came in the morning. I used to keep food in the coal-scuttle. You'll find some there still. You're welcome to it. It's no use to me any more. And now I've told you the whole story.'

'You have told me nothing, sir!' said I. 'What possessed you—' I really did not know what to ask. He had spoken in such a forlorn, dreary, strangely cynical way that I began to suspect, not a crime, but—at last—sheer lunacy. Idiocy would be perfectly natural in the young man.

'Very well, Mr. Key. There was a document which it was necessary—at least I thought so—that I should examine. To your eyes it was only an old Latin sermon, or essay, about the virtues of some miserable saint or other of the Middle Ages. But I had reason to think—reason which I should vainly try to make you understand—that it might, nay, must, be a palimpsest: perhaps even the word is strange to you. And yet even you, Mr. Key, must have heard that some of our most precious classics have been lost by being erased and over-written with worthless monkish chronicles; but that many have been recovered, in our own times, by chemically removing the monkish stuff, and, by a re-agent, restoring the old writing so as to be legible again. I had reason to think, from certain partial experiments I had already tried, that this absurd puff of St. Willibrord covered—well, nothing less than some portions of the lost books of Livy. I need not go through the course of reasoning that led me to that con-

clusion. Enough that the reasons were sound; and, after all, in such matters instinct and insight are the best of all reasons. Certainty must always depend upon something higher than mere evidence, Mr. Key, which can never amount to proof, however strong it may be. It is only faith which can ever be sure. And so—'

'And so you believed, because you wished to believe, that you would find Livy in a lawyer's office in Burgham. Why didn't you say so before?'

'Because I didn't choose to be called mad by mere people of common sense, like you and your father, until I could come to you and say, "See here!" And now I say, "See here; see the result of disappointed faith, and of labour in vain." You are right. I am good for nothing. I am an ass and a fool.'

I began to see at last with what sort of man I had to deal. 'So you found nothing?' said I.

'Worse than nothing. Look here,' he said, uncovering the parchment that lay before him, and which was, indeed, the old Latin manuscript which my father had thrown into a drawer to keep this queer sort of a clerk from wasting his time; as if a fanatic of any sort, and not only a lover, will not find out the way. 'Yes, that monk, whoever it was, was not so bad as some of them. He only used an old deed to scrawl over; if a man must write rubbish, he can't do better than use rubbish to write it on.'

'An old deed of the times of the monks? But that must be a curiosity in its way, after all. What is it? That old writing beats me.'

'I don't know. I didn't care to recover more than enough to show me that I had thrown all my labour away. If you care to

know, it seems like the record of a conveyance, by the corporation of Burgham to the priory of Welwood, of the Campus de Easton, in the parish of St. Botolph *intra muros et terminos de Burgham*; which means "within the walls and bounds." I have read no more. And enough, too.'

'Quite enough,' said I. 'Go home and go to bed: of course I must speak to my father about you, though the affair, I am glad to say, doesn't look as bad as I feared.'

I locked up carefully enough this time, let myself and Dick Musty out by the same way I had entered, so as not to disturb the housekeeper, and carried the old parchment home with me to show my father. It was of no practical use; but it certainly was, or might be, of interest to local antiquarians. It was remarkable, any way, that the document should have remained in the custody of the parsons of St. Michael's, as it must have done, ever since the days before the Reformation; but certain old documents have a wonderful way of escaping the doom of waste paper, to which things of more value are so perilously liable. An old invitation to a long-eaten dinner will survive under circumstances in which an important receipt will prove mysteriously and hopelessly missing.

But nothing of all this could possibly affect the miserable case of which my mind was full. I forgot, or rather did not even trouble to remember, to mention the matter to my father, after all. He had too much on his mind to be troubled about Dick Musty, for whom I now felt rather pity than anger, inexcusable as his conduct had been.

I remember, as well as any in my life, the day when my father at last decided, finally, that fight-

ing would be worse than folly, and that the Brambles must go to Mr. Horace Jones. Mr. Evelyn Viner had been talking everything over with us—not that there was much left to talk about—and had stayed to dine. He took things well, I must say. Instead of losing his appetite, he talked about what chances he would have if he went to the Bar, and would not even go back to the great question now that it had been settled for good and all. He made all sorts of talk for everybody; and presently, in an incidental way, we got upon local matters, and one of us mentioned the singularity of the name of that churchless parish, 'St. Botolph in Turn.' We all made guesses at its origin, and at last I said,

'I think it must mean St. Botolph in-Ternus, or in Terminibus, or within the walls or boundaries of the town.'

'By Jove,' said my father, 'it might be! But I didn't know you were such a scholar as that, Tom. How did you get hold of that idea? St. Botolph in Turn is within the town boundaries; so much is true.'

'I'm afraid I can't claim the guess as quite original,' said I. 'Oddly enough, I got it from an old deed that was among old Parson Evans's papers, which I've got up-stairs, and will show you if you like, as it seems curious in its way. I'll tell you the whole story; but not now.'

I brought the half-deciphered document out of my bedroom, which my father recognised at once as the parchment he had taken from the hands of Dick Musty. We looked at it in the manner of the very unskilled archæologists that we were.

'How odd!' said Mr. Evelyn Viner. 'Campus de Easton means Easton Field, the other name for

the Brambles. A curious accident, indeed.'

'And the Brambles is still rated to St. Botolph,' said I.

I wished I had not brought down the document, after all. But Mr. Evelyn Viner spoke as if it mattered nothing to him. I believe in his heart he was fool enough to be half glad that Miss Margaret was to come to him poor, so that he might work for her.

'Tom,' said my father, 'this document is really a curiosity. I must show it to the mayor, and we'll have the rest of it made out when we've got nothing else to do. It's odd I never noticed there was anything of the sort about this deed. But I remember, it was the day I was taken ill. It shows how careful a town ought to be about preserving the evidence of its boundaries. The nature of the ownership of the Brambles has always happened, you see, to make it perfectly immaterial whether that part of St. Botolph lay within or without the town; and Mr. Wilfred Jones voted as a freeman. This old document may prove important evidence of town rights in time to come. Why—but—great Heaven! he suddenly cried out, starting from his chair.

I thought he had been seized with a sudden fit, and was about to fall. Mr. Viner also started towards him; and, in truth, there looked reason for alarm, considering his recent illness and his chronic worry about the Brambles, and his apoplectic flush, and his vain efforts to speak a word. But at last he waved us away from him, and fell back again into his chair.

Then he raised his fist and brought it down upon the old Latin sermon with a bang that made the glasses ring.

'Hurrah!' he shouted. 'Three cheers for Miss Peggy, and a fig for Mr. Horace Jones!'

Had he gone mad after all?

'Tom! Has there been a single case of the Brambles passing to the heir-at-law of an intestate within the memory of the law?'

'No,' said I. 'How could there be—till now—when it belonged to a college till it was bought by Mr. John Jones! But—don't you feel well?'

'Well! Tom, don't *you* be a fool! Then there's been continuous custom—continuous custom, because there hasn't been the possibility of a breach—'

'What breach? What custom?' I could only look at Mr. Viner in despair, and think what I could do, with my father going out of his senses before my eyes.

'Is the Brambles in Burgham or no?'

'Surely, sir, if that document is to be believed.'

'It is to be believed. It is legal proof, and proof in good custody, sir; and uncontradicted and uncontradictable by all the Horace Joneses in the habitable globe! The Brambles *is* in Burgham. And what is the tenure of lands in Burgham? You—a Burgham lawyer—don't know?'

'I—'

'Then I'll tell you, and I'm ashamed of you! It's *Borough English*, sir! And, by the custom of Borough English, all lands and tenements within the Bounds of Burgham go to the *youngest* son, instead of the eldest, when there's no will!'

I need not carry the history of

the case farther than by saying that the strange old custom of Borough English, which still prevails in other places than Burgham, and the origin of which has defied theory to discover, effectually disinherited Mr. Horace Jones simply because he was his father's eldest son, and gave the Brambles to Miss Margaret because she was the heiress of the youngest son of old John Jones. I have told my story; but only because I think it strange enough to be worth the telling. It has a moral for 'mere lawyers' like myself, and it is this. Don't think Practice everything, and Learning nothing. England is a curious country, and the Middle Ages take a long time to kill.

As for poor Dick Musty, through whom—by no means through any merit of his own—it had come out that the Brambles had never ceased to be a part of the ancient Borough of Burgham, Mr. and Mrs. Viner could not see that he was undeserving of a most unreasonable and disproportionate reward. Learning from my father and myself his complete unfitness for the law, they sent him back to Cambridge, where he got his degree and a fellowship and settled down at last into a happily useless member of society, not without some reputation as an authority on palimpsests and doubtful readings. I suppose he is as dead as Livy by this time, seeing how long ago all this happened. Everything ended rightly; but even now I almost tremble when I think how that Great Estate hung upon such a mere 'Touch-and-Go.'

HOW EVERY MAN WRITES HIS OWN MEMOIRS.

I HAVE somewhere met with the fine generalisation, that every man is a philosopher and every woman an actress. The hypothesis of this paper is, that every man—under which we take the liberty of including every woman—is an author. Not only are there the acted life and the spoken life, but also the written life. Every one knows the immense value of memoirs, if only *pour assister à l'histoire*. Indeed, there are even letters, written without the slightest thought of formal authorship, which are among our greatest literary treasures, and constitute the most authentic materials for history. The letters of Cicero, for instance, have a value far beyond his great speeches and philosophical works: written in careless undisguised fashion, they tell us much about his own character and his own times. The Paston letters are simply invaluable, for the flood of light which they throw upon contemporary history. Lord Macaulay says he would exchange tons of State papers for some love-letters which had passed between Sir William Temple and his sweetheart. There is, indeed, a special charm in all biography. Carlyle forcibly says, that as the Gospel was a biography, so every biography has something of a Gospel about it. It may be said, with at least equal truth, that every life has its own romance. It is so, indeed; but it is so only when a full fair narrative is given, and genuine lessons are drawn. It has so happened that the present writer

has known several people whose biographies have been written after their decease. He has found considerable difficulty in recognising his old friends. They are little better than the waxen figures at Madame Tussaud's. Perhaps we might draw quite as good lessons from their failures as from their virtues; but the failures all disappear on the biographer's printed page. People who were very human pose as heroes, and are as stiff and unnatural as lay-figures. Of all biography the autobiography is the most natural and most amusing. Some people have a passion for writing autobiography. They are absorbed in themselves, and they think that all the world revolve round their axis, and are deeply interested in their affairs. Some of these autobiographies are palpably insincere; but taken as a whole, autobiography is the most charming and instructive order of literature.

We speak of unconscious cerebration, and unconscious autobiography frequently forms a species of this. In how many a work one may disentangle an autobiographical element! Indeed, there are not many books of any kind, except those on physical or mental science, where something of this kind is not to be detected. Take, for instance, the literature of voyages and travels: in each case the author is really writing an autobiography. Madame Ida Pfeiffer and Miss Isabella Bird may be said to have given us their lives in their travels. When

an inexperienced 'literary hand' writes a novel, the novelist is to us more interesting than the hero and the heroine. He, or more probably she, goes into the confessional, and tells the story of her life. She writes her own memoirs. We perceive what is the governing idea of human life, what is the kind of character admired, what are the aims and purposes of life, what is the kind of practical justice which the author would desire to be dealt out. When people become real craftsmen in literary art, they are able to disguise all this—they acquire the *ars celare artem*; but in the fresh writer the self-revelation is always manifest. The poets are absorbed in their own individuality, which is perhaps a mild way of saying that they are intensely egotistic. Monsieur Jourdain was astonished when he was informed that he had been speaking prose all his life. It is my province to inform all my readers that they have not only been speaking prose all their lives, but also writing prose, and this prose has a very distinctive literary character. In other words, every man writes his own memoirs.

There are multitudes of people who would never think of associating themselves with the idea of authorship, and yet they are, practically, authors upon a large scale. Unconsciously they are always writing their own memoirs. And if they could see all their letters brought together into an immense heap, they would be surprised at the largeness of it. Even if they took away all business matters and trivial details, there would be a good deal of a certain sort of literary work. There is a kind of De Foes simplicity about them, which has a charm of its own. I have often read letters of a very unambitious unliterary kind, which, from ac-

curate observation, right feeling, and photographic statements, have a real charm and interest. Editors of newspapers like to get hold of such letters; and readers find them not the least interesting part of the broadsheet. So many worthy unimportant people may find that they are not only authors, but very fair authors, in their way. And their authorship may extend even further than their written memoirs. It is said that every syllable we breathe is written on the air, that the atmosphere is a vast wandering library, and it is within the scientific imagination that all our words may be rendered back to us again. 'The analysis of expression is the study of character,' says Vinet. Language, written or spoken, is the impress, the index, the exposition of character. The impress of words is a close and abiding one. When we put the words on paper, we extend and propagate their influence:

'Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And spread for ever and for ever.'

You never take a pen in hand but you are showing something of your own character. The very style of the handwriting is an element in the determination of character. The way in which a man dashes off a letter is very much the way in which a man uses his voice. There is a modulated ease in the tones of the handwriting. Without professing to be experts, like Messrs. Chabot and Netherclift, we can certainly gather a general idea of character from the handwriting. A Minister was commenting on a very strong despatch in the presence of his sovereign. 'The language is strong,' said the statesman; 'but the writer does not mean it; he is irresolute.' 'Whence do you see irresolution?' said the king. 'In his *n*'s and *g*'s, please your

Majesty.' Only it is to be said that a great deal of humbug is often talked by people who profess to be judges of handwriting. I showed a professor of caligraphy a letter which I had received. He took a very unfavourable view of the handwriting. It was the handwriting of a man without learning, without genius, without feeling. 'And now, sir,' I said, 'will you look at the signature?' The letter was written by Lord Macaulay.

Before we proceed to point out the universality of our proposition, we ought to look at those who, in a special and formal sense, are writers of memoirs. The literature of autobiography is of vast extent. It is both the most interesting and the most truthful of all biography; the raciest, the frankest, the most instructive. Some of such works rank among the world's greatest literary treasures. The Church will never surrender such treasures as the autobiographies of St. Augustine and of St. Hilary of Poitiers. Volumes of 'Reminiscences,' 'Journals,' 'Correspondence,' 'Despatches,' all come under this head. It seems to be a personal relief to many great men to unburden themselves to posterity. We find this in the case of such great men as Guizot and Sir Robert Peel; in Sully, in Clarendon, in Prince Metternich. We have the private memoirs of the two illustrious brothers, the Duke of Wellington and the Marquess Wellesley. Mr. Gladstone gives the world 'a fragment of autobiography;' Gibbon's autobiography is immortal, the most precious specimen of its class. Cardinal Newman's *Apologia* is a magnificent example of a man writing his own memoirs. Sometimes it is the correspondence that throws an entirely new light on a man's whole character and

disposition. In a few letters, or in a few lines of a single letter, a man writes his memoirs far better than a memoir-writer could do it for him. How thoroughly does the terrible eagle-eyed Chatham reveal his loving nature in the sweet letters which he wrote to his wife from Lyme Regis! 'Indeed, my life, the promise of our dear children does me more good than the purest of pure air.' In the dulness of a State paper or of a formal history we often find the 'touch of nature,' the sudden gleam of light, the uplifting of an obscure veil; we are in possession of the true secret of things, and come to the meaning of the memoir. Even when we are not reading a formal autobiography, we may search for the autobiographical element, and, in the case of the illustrious people whom we have named, this element is of intense interest and value. Instances of this kind might be multiplied almost *ad infinitum*. How interesting it is to read the confessions of courtiers from Pepys to Grenville! We have biographical fragments by the mighty Cæsar himself, by Charles V., and the Empress Catherine II. of Russia. Bismarck covertly allows ever so much of his biography to appear. Medical men, like Holland and Brodie; lawyers, like Romilly and Lord Cockburn; authors, like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamartine, Gifford, Hume, John Stuart Mill, rush into present or posthumous print in order to present their own views of their own characters. This autobiographical element is constantly to be disentangled from works not essentially autobiographical. People with the habit of introspection and accurate observation can hardly fail to be so. This is eminently the case with poets

and philosophers. They are people who, to use medical language, are always watching their own symptoms and diagnosing their own cases. For instance, the late Mr. George Henry Lewes, in his last work, *Problems of Life and Mind*, and in his other mixed philosophical and physiological essays, is constantly discussing his own mental and bodily states. The same egoism practically pervades all classes of the community; and every man does, in an incomplete and fragmentary way, what the professed autobiographers do on a large and elaborate scale. Every man, after some sort or other, writes his own memoirs.

It is simply impossible for a great writer to avoid an autobiographical element in his writings. I think this is very clearly seen in the three great writers of the Victorian epoch who have left us within recent memory—Lord Lytton, Mr. Dickens, and Mr. Thackeray. In the case of Lord Lytton, it is remarkable that time, which generally thins the reputation of great men, has gone far to advance his. It is curious that he always steadily protests against identifying his own life with that of his heroes, yet the identification is sometimes thoroughly complete. Sometimes, indeed, he is ready to admit the 'soft impeachment.' He denies it in *Ernest Maltravers*—the work which Mrs. Browning loved so much—which nevertheless is very autobiographical in character; but in *Devereux* he aims at the real, and confesses that his work has some of the characteristics of an autobiography. It is easy to see that he was a very industrious man, and when he tells us that he spent so much time in the pursuits of scholarship and metaphysics, it is quite easy to credit it. It is the fashion to laugh at what

is called the 'high-flown' portion of his writings; but there is no other writer who has interwoven so much thoughtfulness into his fictions. His son, Earl Lytton, is a better poet, but he would be utterly incompetent to write one of his father's stories. To my mind it is very interesting to note how Lord Lytton, in a sort of fashion, is always hinting at his own memoirs. Of course one does not wish, through any personal stories or tittle-tattle, to identify him with any of the incidents which he delineates. But one or two curious points may be noted. As Lord Lytton gets on in the world he makes his heroes mount the social tree. At the commencement of *My Novel*, Audley Egerton is a Minister of State; he is not a Cabinet Minister, but just below the mystic line which separates Cabinet Ministers from other Ministers. But before the conclusion of the novel, Audley is supposed to be one of the ruling spirits of the Cabinet and their spokesman to the country. The explanation is that Lord Lytton had gone up in the world and had become a Cabinet Minister himself. Similarly, as Lord Lytton gets old the heroes of his love-stories become ever older and older. The successful lovers of his later fictions are middle-aged men, who are becoming old men. He has a chronology of fiction which corresponds with the chronology of his own life. He identifies himself with his heroes and his heroes with himself. Mr. Thackeray was steadfastly opposed to the idea of ever having his memoirs written, but none the less he has been a writer of his own memoirs. It was a great part of the business of Thackeray's literary career to attack Lord Lytton, to whose vein of poetry and philosophy he

never approximated; but he often wears his heart on his sleeve and tells his own story. It does not require much literary analysis or disintegration to take from this character or that character enough of incident and disposition to build up a veritable Thackeray. It is not simply that Thackeray draws upon his own experience, for all authors do that, but he does so in such a distinct and unmistakable manner that he virtually writes his own memoirs. We see the artist subsiding into the *littérateur* and the Bohemian becoming the highly solvent citizen. Again, in the case of Charles Dickens it became a common criticism that Mr. Forster's memoirs had not told us the real story of Dickens's life. The hero of Mr. Forster's work was Mr. Forster himself. Even the 'Letters' did not help us forward very much. The simple explanation is, that he threw his whole life into his stories. He did not even spare his own father, whom he showed up in Micawber. You could almost construct a memoir of his life from day to day out of his stories.

That very thoughtful and accomplished writer, Mr. Foster, has an essay, the first in his volume, on 'A Man's writing Memoirs of Himself.' Mr. Foster's object rather appears to be to persuade men to write their own memoirs; that which, according to our thesis, in point of fact they are constantly doing. Mr. Foster urges his point very elaborately; and it might be well if men would do consciously and deliberately what in point of fact they cannot help doing in however imperfect and summary a fashion. He points out that such memoirs might really be included in a very narrow compass. There would be no necessity to go through the immense variety of external facts. It would be

sufficient, he argues, if a man noticed the changes and advances in feeling and intelligence. He thinks that one of the most potent facts in biography is the predominant influence brought upon us at one time or another by some stronger and more experienced nature than our own. He truly says that a man when he is old would be astonished on looking back upon what he had said or written when he was young. Most people, as they get on in life, experience something of this feeling. It would almost seem that as not a shred of the animal frame remains after the lapse of a certain or uncertain term of years, so it is also with the mind of man. Yet the identity is continuous and subsists unchanged. On all accounts Mr. Foster leans to the opinion that a man should write his memoirs.

Now every man is in a way autobiographical. There is a kind of authorship attaching to each one of us. In the course of a number of years, *volens volens*, a man is compelled to become a writer. Even the man who holds scribbling in utter detestation would be surprised to see how much he scribbles in the course of a twelvemonth. You may send telegrams instead of letters, and reduce both letters and telegrams to the smallest dimensions, and all the while one is carrying on the *magnum opus* of one's own *Life and Correspondence*. Take, as the smallest example, those brief notes of which every one is obliged to write and receive a good number in the course of a year. I have often thought that human character is wonderfully displayed in those short notes. What a difference between the flowing lines and the hard angularities, between the hand full of mind and character and the

abominably good hand which, despite the neat caligraphy, is commonplace and mechanical! How kindly and courteous is the tone of some of the little notes, and how rude and abrupt that of others! One man has very little to say, but he puts it with a kind of epigrammatic neatness, while the other gives the curtest of negatives or assents. One man contrives to put an element of personal kindness into his slightest missive, but the other manages to preserve his coldness and distance even with ink and paper. In printed volumes of correspondence I always look out for the very short notes. They are frequently the raciest and most characteristic of the whole set. Many persons, who would not take the trouble of reading the wonderful despatches of the Duke of Wellington, are glad to read any of those innumerable short notes in which 'F.M. the Duke of Wellington presents his compliments' to an immense variety of people. We must all enjoy the short notes of Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Carlyle, and we all value notes from our correspondents, albeit they are not Ruskins and Carlyles, which come under the denomination of 'short and sweet.' There are some people who write even kind letters in an ungracious manner, and others who possess a most obliging way of disobliging us, and are very clever in the combination of the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*.

It is a common remark to make that in these days people have ceased to write letters. They used to write epistles, but now they only send messages. Like all other sweeping remarks, this generalisation is only partly true. There are people who write, or ought to write, with constancy to each other. There are the lovers'

letters, which always constitute a tremendous item in the correspondence of the country, and which almost disarrange the public service on and about the 14th of February. Then there are the letters of brothers and sisters, which should ever be so bright and interesting in purity of affection and harmony of interests. Then there are the letters which parents write to their children, and children to their parents. Then there are some people who maintain such constant intimacy and friendship that they write to each other regularly, though it may be at long intervals. There are many persons who are called to write letters in every one of the capacities that we have mentioned; and when years roll by and much correspondence has accumulated we may truly say of such men, as we say of all men, that each man writes his own memoirs. I have heard of good children who in all quarters of the globe and through all vicissitudes of fortune have never ceased to write to the old home once a week. They have left memoirs rich in moral beauty.

There are some people who never write letters. Of course this is not absolutely true, because sudden emergencies arise when it is not possible to escape writing any more than to escape talking. Still, they hate it, and hold aloof from it as much as possible. You cannot keep up the social ball unless you help to toss it to and fro. More than that, there are people who naturally wish to be written to. If they do not receive the letters which they expect, they naturally feel hurt, and, not without reason, consider themselves neglected. You can often do no kinder or more Christian act than sit down and write a long letter to some sensitive-minded friend, to whom such a letter must be as the very

wine of life. Now people who glory in non-writing have no kindly or charitable feeling of this sort. They lose their friends, if indeed they ever had any friends to lose. Still, nearly every one comes into the world provided in the providential order of things with the friends whom we call relations. The non-writer will not even answer letters. Perhaps he will hardly condescend to read them. Take, for instance, the social duty of answering invitations or letters of inquiry about servants' characters. You will find that 'Mrs. S. presents her compliments to Mrs. T., and regrets to decline her polite invitation.' This is not the right kind of thing. The word 'decline' can never be used without a certain harshness of intonation. How different from the bright and lively letter in which our young friend Angelina Gushington will express her real regret that she cannot enjoy that evening the society of her friend! Similarly, in answering the letter of an inquiry, what a difference there may be in the two styles of writing! The one person is courteous and considerate towards the correspondent, anxious to be just and kindly, and, at the same time, truthful and useful; while the other may withhold necessary facts, and limit the note to the curtest and most conventional terms. A correspondent of this unfavourable type will not leave much material on which to found a judgment; but still there may be enough to indicate a character essentially ungracious and unsatisfactory. If you find only few letters to friend and acquaintance, or even to husband, brother, or child, and those few cold and commonplace, you can hardly help arriving at an adverse verdict.

There are certain kinds of letters which we all have to write at

times, and in which a great deal of character is shown. Such are letters of congratulation and condolence, birthday letters, letters on births, deaths, and marriages. Your man of morose turn of mind does not trouble himself much with this sort of letter. He leaves it to his womenkind, who will at least throw a little feeling into it, more, indeed, than he himself is likely to possess. In examining such letters it is not difficult to distinguish between the true ring of sympathy and what is merely counterfeit or conventional. It requires a bright and courageous person to write a letter of congratulation to a poor man who has just got his eleventh child. There is a right way and a wrong way of writing a letter of congratulation on a marriage or an engagement. Occasionally a correspondent thinks it his or her duty to say some severe truths. He is afraid that the gentleman's character may not bear inspection, and that his prospects are very overclouded. Such a morose-minded correspondent wishes you well; but it is easy to see that he does not draw the happiest auguries for the future. I knew of one old lady who wrote to congratulate a young couple, and told them that they were welcome to be buried in her own vault. And how are we to comfort those who are bereaved? Mere words of form are empty mockery; but at the same time letters of sympathy can administer crumbs of comfort to the bereaved. Such letters are the most difficult to write in the whole world. They make an intense demand upon our feelings and powers of expressing our feelings. I have read some letters which appeared to me to be simply heartless; not that their writers really were heartless, but because they were coarse in grain,

and their words would naturally be clumsy and ineffective. One of the most charming letters of condolence was addressed by Mrs. Grote to Mrs. Stanley, the widow of the well-known bishop, and the mother of the better-known dean: 'Dear Mrs. Stanley,—May I steal into the house of mourning silently and respectfully thus, and, pressing your widowed hand, tell you, without speech, that my heart has been full of you and your precious family since the fatal news reached me? Believe me, no one having so little *right* to grieve for you and yours has more completely shared the painful penalty of sympathy than myself.' Without looking through the charming biography, one feels instinctively what a fine-hearted woman she was.

Then even in business the characteristics of men peep out. In the shortest note a man's nature shows itself. Some people are distinctly of the shark species. They stand on the letter of their rights. They are very fond of referring you to their solicitor. They studiously exact the pound of flesh. They manage to insert a growl in their notes. They are very fond of styling themselves 'your obedient servant'; but neither adjective nor substantive has the least meaning for them. Now you see a studious moderation and desire to be fair in the letters of other people. They are lenient and considerate. Sometimes they fling an uncommon amount of heartiness even into the merest details of ordinary life. I wrote to a very great man the other day on a very small matter, and he wrote back, calling himself, 'Yours ever most faithfully.' It was rather a bit of gush; but he proceeded on the Irishman's theory, that one man was as good as another, or better, and having a large heart

he would no doubt meet any demands that might be made on his sincerity and kindness as far as possible. There are some people who, even in sending an invitation, will fling in some extra kindness which will quite lift them out of the run of ordinary invitations. For instance, if any one is staying with you, they will beg you to bring your friend. If you live at a great distance, they will offer to send a carriage. Very probably they will ask you to take a bed and extend your visit. In any business relations, which, in some people, might involve litigation, they are the pleasantest people in the world to deal with. They do not ask, neither do they wish to receive, anything beyond a fair value. The old phrase, *caveat emptor*, has no application for them. If there is any defect or deficiency on their side, they candidly admit it or point it out. They swear to their neighbour and do not disappoint him. If there is any difficulty they are ready to meet you half-way, and to suggest an equitable and even a generous compromise. You always retain an agreeable impression of your dealings with such people; and when you look over and docket your papers, you acknowledge that you have had dealings with a gentleman.

There are few tasks which, in their way, are so sad and disheartening as looking over old letters. What may be the best plan of disposing of old letters is a point frequently mooted, a question requiring practical solution. Some people burn them or send them to the waste-basket as soon as possible, while others keep them all, so far as possible. There is an old proverb that if you keep a paper for seven years you are sure to find a use for it. This especially applies to letters

of business. There are other letters which we can hardly make up our minds to part with. In the recesses of so many desks are still preserved little notes, which we retain as souvenirs of old days and old loves. As we look over the old piles of letters, often so fatiguing and painful a task, there is often a pang of regret as, with hesitancy, we condemn the packet to incineration. Here are letters of the one who jilted us, or of the friend who failed or deceived us. As we look at them we wonder whether constancy survives on earth, were there not noble examples in our memory to contradict it. And how are the letters of our dead friends, perchance of those whom we truly loved and honoured? They are sacred. They are part of ourselves. They needs must abide with us. We read them with a greater sympathy and appreciate them better than when we received them. We understand the writer and the circumstances better now than then. We perceive that this busy lawyer or over-burdened merchant must have sat down after heavy work, out of sheer affection, to write this long letter. We see now what we did not understand at the time, the affection and graciousness of the writer. The circumstances to which the letters referred, the loves and hates, the business and pleasures, the people and surroundings, have all been swept away by the inexorable tide of Time, and we now read the letters for the purposes of analysis and reflection, for the summoning up of memories, for the estimate of character. We now perceive that the very nature of our correspondent has stamped itself indelibly on his letters. Even in the very lines of the handwriting we can trace the indications of character. Especially is this the case in the instance of

lost parents. How inestimable and inestimably suggestive are their letters now! Formerly they were interesting for what the letters had to tell us on behalf of ourselves; but now they are chiefly interesting for what they tell us about their writers. We are enabled to read between the lines. We see the indications of their affection and solicitude; how they accommodated themselves to our own weakness and littleness; we read through grateful tears the documentary evidence of their love and their sacrifices for us. We have the written proofs of their love and care.

To an immense extent people write their memoirs in pocket-books, note-books, and diaries. It takes some little skill in keeping a fair diary, in not putting down too much or too little. I have known people who had to try and try again before they succeeded in hitting their idea. Many published diaries enter into infinite detail respecting feelings and experiences; and no doubt the spiritual and intellectual stages of a man's history form the true life-history. People do not write much in that style just now. The few who do, write often in a cipher or in a foreign language. But, as a rule, people only scratch the surface of their diaries. They make entry of commonplace events and of all their engagements and appointments. It appears a very thin kind of memoir after all. It is only by analysing and disintegrating the details, by looking at the moral quality of actions, by noting in the multiplicity of details where the true landmarks lie, that the scanty entries obtain their full significance, the commonplace entries blossom into romance, and the ruled prosaic pages become story, poetry, or memoir.

Then there is one especial way in which people finally complete and read off their self-written memoirs. I need hardly say that this is in the writing of their wills. Our friend of the curmudgeon species, true to his principles, or his want of principles, to the very last, probably declines to make any will at all. Perhaps he takes a gloomy satisfaction in contemplating the confusion which may possibly be the result of his abstinence from will-making. But if a man does not make a will, the law makes a will for him. Many a person is so perfectly satisfied with the disposition which the law makes of his effects, that he desires no other, and is quite content that his nearest representative should take out letters of administration, and distribute his assets in the way which the law directs. A perusal of wills shows us a strange variety of characters. A will is often a wonderful revelation of human nature. Whole volumes have been written, and may be written yet, on the subject of wills. In some we almost detect insanity on the part of the writers. The eccentricity, the oddity, the injustice, the pride, the revenge, the ostentation of poor human beings are curiously and amply set forth in wills, as also the higher qualities of higher natures.

There is no one, however limited his acquaintance with human nature and history, but knows something of the extraordinary chapters of human history contained in wills. The 'ruling passion strong in death' is constantly developed. I perceive that a recent writer has brought together a great many of the 'curiosities of the Search-room,' from which some examples are called; but any one who has much experience is able to construct a florilegium of his own. He must

have been a dry humorist, with a touch of malice about him, who left a friend two thousand pounds with the condition that half of the money should be placed in his own coffin. He met, however, with an adviser who proved equal to the difficulty. This gentleman advised him to write a cheque for 1000*l.*, and put it in the old gentleman's coffin, drawn to order. Equally ready-witted was a certain Major Hook, whose wife was entitled to an annuity 'so long as she remained above ground.' The gallant Major met the difficulty by putting the deceased in a glass case, and the glass case in a private room, and conscientiously drew the annuity for thirty years afterwards. When one reads the now numerous wills of people who desire to be interred unostentatiously and without the luxurious trappings of woe, we naturally give them credit for some independence of character and good sense. We have heard of sons being cut off with a shilling, but there are cases on record in which the wife has received the same too moderate provision. In one instance the reason is given that the wife had 'made game' of the husband's remonstrances. Another man leaves his wife five hundred pounds, which are not to be given her in her lifetime, but to be spent in a sumptuous funeral for her whenever she might die. Some very sad and curious confessions of the unhappinesses of married lives are to be found in wills. One repentant husband leaves his wife his landed estates, 'assuring myself that she will marry no man, for fear to meet with so evil a husband as I have been to her.' Another clear-minded husband in his will begged his wife, as she had been troubled with one old fool, not to think of marrying another. We do not know whether

the widow exemplified Sir Richard Steele's remark, 'There is no will of a husband so cheerfully obeyed as the last.' Selfish and unjust wills, condemning the wife to lose all her property in case she married again, are to be counted by hundreds. On the other hand, we have personally known of rich women, with power to bequeath property, who have made very generous wills in favour of a second wife and second family. Very different from this is the conduct of a certain Mayor of Bristol, within comparatively recent times, who left a large property to his wife with the proviso that if she remarried, his executors 'shall expel her from all participation therein for ever, making a triple proclamation of the same by sound of trumpet at the high cross.' A very nice kind of character in domestic life must his worship have proved himself. Another man is not only vindictive towards his wife, but very naturally shows the same feeling towards his father-in-law and mother-in-law, 'he being the worst of men, and his wife the worst of women, in all debaucheries. Had I known their characters I had never married their daughter and made myself unhappy.' There is here a warning to young people to look a little into the question of ancestry.

Every now and then we see wills in the *Illustrated London News* which astonish us by the magnitude and benevolence of the pecuniary bequests. Such are the enormous bequests of Mr. Gardner to the blind, and of the late Mr. George Henry Moore, who left sporadic legacies in every conceivable direction. We naturally augur all good things from such amiably-minded testators. But perhaps a still higher degree of sympathy and credit ought to be attached to these generous-minded

beings who have made their benefactions in their lifetime. Such were the late Mr. Atwood, whose anonymous benefactions of a thousand pounds each were acknowledged incessantly in the second column of the *Times*; the late Mr. Kemble of Bath, whose immense gifts were of the rarest delicacy and kindness; and Mr. Holloway, who has proved such a benefactor to the insane of the middle class and to the cause of the higher education of women. When we read of a rich man leaving an enormous fortune to the Metropolitan Board of Works, we suspect an unusual combination of the prosaic and imaginative in his composition. It was much more sensible of Mr. Neald to leave his money to the Queen. You very often find rich people leaving money to the rich, and even poor people doing the same thing. Although some cases may admit of explanation, it appears to me that this is an indication of a very mean order of character, and is carrying snobbishness beyond the tomb. The will of Rabelais—if, indeed, this curious will is really his—quite gives the spirit of his works. 'I have no available property; I owe a great deal; the rest I give to the poor.' One thinks much of the kind-heartedness of people who leave money to dumb animals, always provided, however, that they have not cut out their relations in favour of cats and dogs. Not only to cats and dogs, but to horses, parrots and other birds, and even to fishes, have handsome bequests been left. Even Lord Chancellor Eldon left a small annuity to his dog, which is a relieving feature in his character.

Some wills have lately been brought before the public of which it may be truly said that the testators draw their own characters and write their own memoirs. Thus

Lord Dysart for many years lived in a lodging-house in Norfolk-street, off the Strand, and left a personal estate of nearly two millions. But the great object of his saving seems to have been the paying off of the debts of his deceased son, Lord Huntingtower. The will of the third husband of the late Lady Waldegrave was a remarkable instance of generosity and disinterestedness. 'The unspeakable interest with which I constantly regard Lady Waldegrave's future fate induces me to advise her earnestly to unite herself again with some one who may deserve to enjoy the blessing of her society during the many years of her probable survival of my life.' Lady Waldegrave's own will was an eminent example of justice, as by it she returned to the Waldegrave family, after Lord Carlingford's demise, all the large estates which had come to her from that source. That must have been a lovely-minded wife who left this touching bequest to her husband: 'As I have long given you my heart, and as all my tenderest affections and fondest wishes have always been yours, so is everything else I possess. All that I can call mine being already yours, I have nothing to give but my heartiest thanks for the care and kindness you have at all times shown me, whether in sickness or health, for which God Almighty will, I hope, reward you in a better world. However, for form's sake, I hereby give and bequeath you as follows: First, the 10,000*l.* left me by Sir R. H——; the 200*l.* a year left me by my father; the large gold cup and two lesser gold chocolate-cups and stands, which I wish you would sometimes look on in memory of my death, and of the fondest and faithfullest friend you ever had.'

There is one step even beyond the will to which we might carry the unconscious memoir-writing of human lives. This consists in the inscriptions which persons have written for themselves, or which they have desired to have engraved, on their tombs. Dean Milman thought that there were no such funeral inscriptions as those written by the Greeks. There is one such inscription in the *Anthology*, which has been Englished thus:

'Timocrates of Rhodes lies here, and
freely doth confess
That he ate and drank and slandered
a very great excess.'

Certainly Timocrates contrived to write a very comprehensive memoir within a narrow compass. I often think of the poor wretch who on his tombstone summed up his own history, wrote his own memoir, in the single word 'Miserrimus.' When we go through a volume of inscriptions, or visit such territories of pale Death as the cemeteries of Woking and Kensal Green, it would be interesting to know how many of these convulsive efforts to preserve a memory and a name have been made by people themselves under the instinct of desiring to write their own memoirs. In some sort of way, my friends, depend upon it this is what we are all doing. We are every day writing our memoirs and finding our readers. And when we are gone, the tones that seemed forgotten will start again into life, the old handwriting will stand out distinct and clear as the mystic handwriting on the wall. Let us try and edit our scattered memoirs, over which the Recording Angel keeps supervision, as carefully as we may, that they may touch some chords of memory and affection among those who will meet with these reliquary fragments of our lives.

AMONG THE HEATHER.

A Highland Story.

BY A. C. HERTFORD.

CHAPTER XIII.

'When you do dance, I wish you
A wave of the sea, that you might ever
do nothing but that.'

SHAKESPEARE.

'You are too officious in her behalf that
scorns your services.' *Id.*

PETER's toilet was completed only just in time, for as he regained the hall a peal at the bell announced the first arrival. One by one the party gathered, till the full number had arrived, and soon the dancing began in earnest. It was a very pretty sight, that Highland gathering, with its fresh young faces, all prepared to enjoy the fun to the utmost; for after a month or two of rustication, how delightful an unexpected dance is! What with the piper and the fiddler and Fanny's nimble fingers (for she was a matronly little body, and did not care to dance), they had music in abundance. There was a pretty fair sprinkling of kilts, worn by 'those who had the right to wear them,' as Norah would have said, namely, by true Highlanders, whom you could not mistake to be such, and who carried their kilts as a part of themselves.

Miss Tennant was completely charmed at sight of them.

'O Miss Grant!' she exclaimed eagerly, coming over to where Norah sat, 'don't those kilts look perfectly charming? I am simply dying to dance with one, are not you?'

'I should say it depended en-

tirely on what sort of person there was inside it,' she answered, laughing, much to the amusement of Mrs. Keith, who was seated near, and had overheard the conversation.

'If you are so anxious to dance with a kilt, Miss Tennant,' she said, 'I shall have the greatest pleasure in introducing one or two to you, for I know almost everybody here to-night.'

Miss Tennant was 'delighted' of course; and the good-natured lady departing, returned with the coveted object, and the younger lady was soon dancing away, looking as if in the seventh heaven of happiness. Norah had been helping Fanny in her many duties as hostess, chatting to shy girls, finding partners for plain ones, and entertaining two or three elderly ladies; she had made these her pretext for refusing Percival the first dance of the evening. She had no ambition to open the ball with this young gentleman, and finally bestowed the last round or two of the dance on Peter. He was a capital waltzer, Norah was equally good; and as Geoffrey stood aside watching the graceful little figure moving in perfect time to the well-marked music, dancing like the lady she so thoroughly was, he felt there was none in the room 'who could with her compare.' A feeling of pride and elation rose in him as each of the many pretty girls present danced

gracefully past him ; for all, in his eyes at least, sank in comparison with Norah. He suddenly remembered he had no right to harbour such thoughts, and checked himself with a sigh. Well, he must not become morose and surly, even though at times his heart did feel heavy ; so, discovering an elderly chaperon seated by herself in a corner, and not looking very merry, he good-naturedly joined her, and proceeded to make himself agreeable, till Fanny, spying him out, came over to rally him on his laziness, and marching *him* round with her, introduced him to one fair lady after another, till he began to tremble for the corner in his programme he meant to ask Norah to fill.

That young lady proved first favourite at the dance, and Mr. Ross became amused at the number of introductions he had to make 'to that pretty girl in white.' And it was no wonder ; for such a sweet, frank, natural girl *is* somewhat of a rarity in a ballroom. Norah never flirted, 'she did not know how,' she said, and therefore wisely refrained from attempting. Miss Tennant, on the contrary, was rather proud of confessing that 'she was afraid she *was* a bit of a flirt,' and practised the art to the best of her ability, thereby captivating now and then a small boy or two.

Later on in the evening, Norah made Percival happy by bestowing a waltz on him ; and, as she preferred his dancing to his conversational powers, unmercifully kept him at the former, so that supper-time came, and still he had never been allowed his much-coveted opportunity of talking to her alone. To his intense disgust, he was paired off with an uninteresting young lady, while he saw Geoffrey go up to Norah and the two depart to the supper-room

together ; and what was still more trying, he could see from his seat, where he had to attend to the multifarious wants of his very hungry young lady, how well they were getting on together. They were amusing themselves about something, he could see, for several times Norah's low laugh sounded in his ear in reply to some remark of Geoffrey's. 'Very likely poking fun at some of their neighbours, at him probably ;' and he carved the cold chicken savagely, and, in his absence of mind, brought his partner the entire half of one fowl, instead of a wing as he had intended. He need not have made himself so uneasy, for he was entirely wrong in his conjectures. Geoffrey was far too great a gentleman to make fun over any of the guests assembled there, and far too much a man of honour to endeavour in any way to lower Percival in Norah's eyes ; if she could not see how much the man was worth for herself, he would not be the one to enlighten her. They had merely been chatting very pleasantly on ordinary subjects, and Norah's laugh had been in answer to some absurd story Geoffrey was retailing for her benefit. Poor Percival of course could not know this, and seeing them rise and return to the ballroom together, his ire rose, his indignation increased, till the hungry young lady, finding him a very uninteresting companion, quickly finished her supper, and proposed adjourning to the hall. Geoffrey and Norah were dancing together now, and Percival leaned listlessly against the wall, determining to stand and watch them, that he might immediately afterwards claim Norah for the dance she had promised him. There was an old gentleman near, one of the guests, and thinking to amuse the young man, who seemed

dull, he forthwith began to descant on the dancers, asking who they were, and criticising pretty freely where he felt inclined.

'Now, there goes as well-assorted a couple as any I have seen,' he remarked, as Geoffrey and Norah passed. 'What a graceful little girl she is, and he as manly and fine a fellow as any in the room! Are they great friends now, do you know, sir?' asked the tormenting old gentleman, who, like Fanny, was a bit of a match-maker.

'No, certainly not—mere acquaintances!' and the answer was so hotly given, that the old gentleman looked up surprised.

'O, no offence, no offence, I hope; but they look so perfectly well matched to-night, that I thought perhaps Fate had destined them to remain so.'

'Nothing of the kind, I assure you, sir,' said Percival, striving to speak calmly. 'The young lady is a Miss Grant, and I agree with you that there is no one so pretty in the room; but I can't say I admire her partner much; he is a Mr. Lindsay, and not quite the style I care for—rather too like a dancing bear to suit *my* taste.'

The old gentleman smiled as he contemplated the good-looking ladylike youth beside him, but thought it wiser to quit the subject, as his companion did not seem much to relish it; and the dance being over, the conversation dropped.

Percival at once made for the spot where Norah was seated.

'Miss Grant, you don't forget that the next is our dance—number twelve, you know?'

'Mr. Leicester, you don't mean to tell me you are actually going to attempt a reel?' she answered, laughing. 'You are very bold, but I am afraid you must look out for a more experienced partner, as I mean only to be an on-

looker.' Then taking pity on his bewildered looks, she explained, 'Didn't you hear that the dance has been altered, and that this is to be a Highland reel? See, here is the piper going to begin.'

'You surely won't care to be so near that deafening noise, Miss Grant. There is a charmingly comfortable seat in the conservatory. Will you sit out the dance there instead?'

'On the contrary, Mr. Leicester, I don't mind the bagpipes in the least, and have a great desire to see a Highland reel properly danced. I shall stay and watch; you may sit here too if you really don't mean to dance.'

Percival had to accept the second best thing he could get, though talking was out of the question on account of the sweet melodies of the bagpipes, which had already begun to sound.

The piper, a handsome man, whose good figure the kilt showed off to advantage, had already begun to march slowly and with dignity round the hall, his cheeks inflated with the amount of air he was instilling into his pipes, and playing the opening notes of the reel to warn the company it was about to commence. Presently, when they were all assembled and had taken their places, he took up his position in the corner of the room, and tapping time with his foot, once more commenced to play. He began gently enough, and the company danced in unison to the music. Little by little he played faster, faster, quicker yet, till at last he had worked them into a perfect frenzy. They jumped, they stamped, they shouted; they twisted in and out of one another, out and in again, till, at the grand finale of all, you could hardly distinguish heads from heels, arms from legs, all seemed to mingle in

the one wild frenzy of excitement.

Norah was in perfect fits of laughter before the reel was ended. Of course Peter had been one of the most excited of the dancers ; and to watch his movements alone was enough to upset her gravity. He went to work in such business-like style, throwing heart and soul into his dancing, and looking perfectly in his element. Miss Tennant sat by in perfectly speechless amazement ; and what she wrote in her diary next morning concerning this evening's entertainment, her pen alone knows.

The reel ended, and a short pause having been allowed the energetic dancers in which to recover, the opening bars of a waltz were played. Now was Percival's time ; he claimed his dance, and, after a round or two, proposed that they should rest in the conservatory, 'it was so hot here.'

'Do you think so ?' said Norah. 'I should be sorry to miss this delicious waltz, and I assure you the room does not seem too hot to me.'

Exasperating girl ! Percival was forced to dance another round or two. If he did not take this chance the waltz would soon be over, and then no opportunity for quiet talking would probably arise. In a minute or two he said again,

'Miss Grant, if we wait till this is over there will be a rush of people, and not a seat to be had anywhere. Do let us go now !'

'Well, if you really are so desperately tired I suppose we must ; but it seems to me a great pity that gentlemen are so easily knocked up nowadays,' and, much to Percival's satisfaction, Norah turned her steps towards the conservatory.

'I know there are two comfortable chairs in this corner,' he said eagerly ; 'yes, here they are !

Now you must confess it is pleasanter here than in that hot hall.'

'On the contrary,' said the perverse Norah. 'I enjoy dancing, you see, and we don't get that pleasure every day. These flowers won't take wings, they will be all here to-morrow.'

Percival had been absently pulling a poor geranium head to pieces, wondering how best he could introduce what he wanted so much to say. Now he began somewhat nervously, but warming as he continued :

'Miss Grant, you must have seen all this evening how I have been trying to find an opportunity like this, in which to speak to you uninterruptedly. No ! you *must* let me go on !' he said eagerly, as she half rose from her seat ; 'you must ; for time after time, when I have been about to do so before, you have prevented me, and now I *will* speak ! Miss Grant, you must know what it is I have to say ! You *must* know that I love you beyond—'

'Mr. Leicester,' said Norah hurriedly, 'pray stop. This can but be painful both to you and me ; believe me, it can do no good.'

'Only hear me to the end, I beg ; only let me tell you what my feelings have been ever since I met you. O Miss Grant, Norah—'

'No,' she said quickly ; 'you have no right to call me that, Mr. Leicester. Miss Grant I am to you, and always must be.'

Percival hardly heeded the interruption, but continued impetuously :

'Ever since I first saw you I have felt that none could be to me what you are. O Miss Grant, I lay everything at your feet ! Only tell me there is some little hope ! Don't say "no" at once ; think about it. I will wait as long as you please, only don't say there is no hope.'

Poor fellow ! he looked so sad as he said this, that Norah pitied him from her heart. Ah, but in her pity there was nothing akin to love !

'Mr. Leicester,' she said, trying to speak as calmly and kindly, but withal as firmly, as she could, 'I beg you will listen to me quietly for one minute. I thank you for the honour you have done me—no, stop,' as he was again about to exclaim. 'I thank you for the honour, but I never could consent to be what you wish ; never ! It is by far the kindest plan to tell you so at once ; it would be but cruel to let you hope what I know could never be fulfilled. Indeed, Mr. Leicester,' she added, half smiling, 'you will find many girls far more suited to you, in every way, than I could ever be.'

'I should think I might be the best judge of that !' growled poor Leicester savagely. He was silent for a moment, gazing moodily at his boots. Then once more turning eagerly to her, he said, 'Don't you think that if you were to wait and try you might get to care for me just a little in time ?'

Some lines came into Norah's head as he said this, some lines she had been reading lately :

'Unless you can swear for life, for death,
O, fear to call it loving !'

So the words ran, and she made answer, her eyes flashing, and with just the least sound of contempt in her voice :

'I have told you once, and I tell you again, Mr. Leicester, I can *never* care enough for you to be what you wish ; and even could *you* be content to receive those lukewarm feelings of which you speak, to be satisfied with any one caring for you "just a little," remember that *I* should consider it a wicked lie to swear to love, honour, and obey any man when

in my heart of hearts I felt I could never honestly do so.'

A sudden thought struck Percival.

'Miss Grant, answer me one question, only one. Tell me if you love any one else. I believe you do,' he added, looking up with such an angry expression of countenance as almost to frighten Norah.

Her colour rose, and she drew herself up with dignity, saying :

'You have no right to speak to me in this way ; no right at all. I have answered you simply and honestly, and as kindly as I could. It is cowardly to torment me in this way when I have told you there is no good in it !' Her voice trembled a little as she ended, for she was nervous, poor child, and excited. It soon grew steady again, and she continued : 'Be a man, Mr. Leicester ; don't waste time in regretting what can never be. I am truly sorry for this, truly sorry. I had hoped to spare you this pain ; but you never would take my hints, and so I cannot help it. I pray you think no more about it ; we can always be friends, you know.'

She held out her hand kindly as she spoke, for she felt sorry for the poor fellow. Percival silently took it in his and held it there for a moment ; as he did so, footsteps sounded near, and Norah hastily withdrew it. The next moment voices were heard approaching, and a couple popped their heads in at the conservatory-door, and as quickly withdrew them, the young lady remarking as they walked off, 'I think those two look as if intruders were not desired ! We had better leave them the conservatory to themselves.' She thought her companion must be a very absent-minded man, for he made no answer to her observation ; and

rather cross, too, for as she glanced up at him his face looked as black as a thundercloud. Norah's heart beat quicker and her colour rose as the couple disappeared, for one of those two was Geoffrey!

The guests had departed, the lights were extinguished, and the poor hall, that had done its part so well, now looked forlorn and deserted. Bits of flowers strewed the floor, and the garlands were all faded by the heat. The girls had bidden the gentlemen good-night down-stairs, and Fanny, having seen each to her room, making them promise not to indulge in any hair-brushing talks, and telling them to sleep well and recover from their exertions, had retired to her own chamber, thankful, kind little lady, that the dance had gone off so well.

When she was left alone, Norah seated herself, ball-dress and all, in front of the fire, and, now that doing so could tell no tales to anybody, leant back in her chair, and closed her eyes rather wearily. It had come, then, this that she had feared; and after all, perhaps, it was better to have happened. Percival could never otherwise have been made to understand the truth; and she knew he must leave to-morrow, so that there could be few or no awkward meetings between them. O, but what would she have given that Geoffrey should not have come to the conservatory just when he did! Perhaps he had seen Percival with her hand in his. She was almost sure, from his hurried retreat, that he had, and he had probably attached an entirely wrong meaning to the action. O this weary muddle! Would things ever look bright and happy again? Norah leant her head in her hand, poor little woman, as she asked this question of the glowing red

coals, letting the time slip by, forgetting that it wanted only some twenty minutes to three A.M. There came just then a low tap at the door, and in answer to Norah's 'Come in' it opened very gently, and Jim crept softly in on tiptoe.

'O, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practise to deceive!' she said, laughing softly, as she closed the door behind her. 'I really could not keep my promise to Mrs. Ross! The idea of a cosy little chat with you was too tempting; and I have had to creep on tiptoe along the passage, expecting every moment to hear her door open, when my deceit would have been discovered. But Peter and I leave to-morrow, and who knows when another chance like this may arise?'

To tell the truth, Norah felt far more inclined for a talk with herself than with any one else; she welcomed Jim, nevertheless, and pulled up the second arm-chair to the fire for her.

'No, thanks,' responded Jim. 'I always feel most at home on the hearth-rug, when brushing my hair; and not being attired in my ball-dress, like somebody I know, but only in an old flannel dressing-gown, I have no fear of spoiling it;' and suiting her actions to her words, Jim seated herself comfortably before the fire, and letting down her splendid black tresses, lazily began the business of brushing.

'You lazy little thing,' she said, 'I fully expected to find you, if not in bed, at least very nearly so; and here you are, just as I parted from you, more than half an hour ago, ornaments and all. I much fear you hanker after finery, or whence this reluctance to part with it?'

'Laziness, I am afraid,' said Norah, rising rather wearily, and

beginning to undress. Jim looked up.

'Are you not well, dear? your voice sounds so tired. I am sorry I came, for I am sure the sooner you are in bed the better.'

'I did not look much like going to bed when you first came in, did I? I was indulging in a fit of the blues, and your entrance put a stop to them. Jim, do you believe in presentiments?'

'I should think not!' said practical Jim: 'never had such a feeling in my life; what is it like?'

'If you never experienced it,' answered Norah, smiling, 'I doubt if any description could make the feeling clear to you. But I meant a kind of foreboding, a conviction that something—you don't know what, but something sad—is going to happen to you.'

Jim looked up rather anxiously. 'No, I don't think I can ever remember feeling like that. I try not to imagine evils till they come. They are quite bad enough then. I suspect you are a little out of sorts, perhaps over-danced yourself; I should advise a little *sal volatile*, and bed as soon as possible. Therefore, I shall take myself off.'

'No, don't,' said Norah, detaining her; 'I am not the least sleepy, and a talk will do me far more good than *sal volatile*. How have you enjoyed the ball, Jim?'

'Immensely! it was delightful, as that funny Miss Tennant would say. Norah, isn't that Mr. Lindsay an awfully nice man?' asked Miss Jim, carefully keeping her eyes fixed on the fire. 'I enjoyed my dance with him more than any this evening.'

'Did you, dear?' said Norah, not answering the first part of the question, and thankful that her visitor kindly refrained from conducting the conversation face to face.

'Yes, I did,' continued Jim, 'and I heard several people remarking on his handsome looks. Who do you think was the belle of the evening, Norah?' she turned round now, and fixed her laughing eyes on her friend's face.

'You, perhaps,' answered Norah innocently; 'but I did not notice that any one was so in particular. I thought we all seemed "very passable bodies," as Duncan would say.'

Jim laughed. 'If you were not evidently so very tired, I should much like to shake you, my dear. Kindly take the trouble to walk across this room, look in that glass over there, and you will see the young lady of whom I speak. But I am not going to wait another second; I must go now, and creep back to my room, as quietly as I came. Good-night, you little tired thing;' and Jim rose from her humble position, bent over Norah's chair as she kissed her, and stepped softly to the door, which she noiselessly closed behind her. The next moment, however, it was gently reopened, and her laughing face once more appeared: 'Norah!'

'Yes, Jim; I don't believe you will be in bed to-night.'

'I am not going to disturb you again, never fear; only when you are married promise you will ask me to visit you;' and before Norah could answer, Jim had once more disappeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

'Abruptness is an eloquence in parting, when spinning out the time is but the weaving of new sorrow.'

SIR JOHN SUCKLING.

NORAH slept late that morning; in fact, if the truth must be told, the breakfast-bell, ringing a full hour later than usual, woke her

from her alumbers. She sprang hastily up, and hurriedly began her toilet. Gradually she got her ideas collected; gradually the sense of something unpleasant having lately happened stole across her memory; and then all the facts presented themselves before her—those tiresome unalterable facts. Well, even now she must feel thankful for one blessing, viz. that Percival's departure was fixed for that afternoon; there could be no chance of his stay being prolonged now, even were he asked. Poor Percival! Norah felt unfeignedly sorry for him, and I am thankful to say that with that pity there mingled not one trace of triumph. Nevertheless, she was entirely of Mr. Ross's opinion, expressed to his wife on the night of the Keiths' picnic, that not for long would the young gentleman remain heart-broken by his disappointment; she felt sure that Time, the great healer of all troubles, would marvellously soon work changes in Percival's feelings; and she was thankful that it should be so. There was another trouble that weighed upon her, but on that she determined to dwell as little as possible; thinking about it could do no good. A little more than a week now, and then home, and mother.

She hurriedly completed her toilet, and made her way to the dining-room, where the rest of the party, more punctual than herself, were already at breakfast—all except Percival; and Norah, for once, blessed his lazy habits.

'The late Miss Grant?' observed Peter, looking extremely shocked; 'I had hoped better things of you, madam;' and as Norah, after her round of good-mornings, took her seat near him, he continued, 'Allow me to hand you some muffins—cold as

ice, you perceive—such is the result of unpunctuality; may I help you to some ham and eggs? frozen, from the same cause; a little coffee? tepid. Now observe the just punishment of your misdeeds!'

'To listen to you, Peter,' said Mr. Ross, 'one would imagine you had been up and about certainly by cock-crowing; and allow me to tell you that I knocked at your door about half-past nine this morning, and melodious snores were my only answer. I suppose Leicester is at present indulging in the same luxury; but I fear unpunctuality is one of his usual characteristics. Fanny, my dear, had not you better send for some more coffee? I pity that boy's wife, when he gets one,' added the thoughtless Mr. Ross.

In spite of herself, and much to her annoyance, Norah felt her colour rise at these words. Geoffrey, seated opposite, noticed her confusion, and thought he knew the cause.

They lingered some time over breakfast, chatting on the events of last night; then, as Percival still remained absent, betook themselves to the drawing-room, which had now been reduced to something like order.

'How stupid one does feel after a dance, to be sure!' said Fanny, leaning lazily back in her chair, a most unusual position for the busy little woman at this time in the morning. 'One's ideas are all like the furniture, upside down! Norah, you look tired to death; I don't fancy you had much sleep last night.'

Jim was making frantic signs to Norah from behind Fanny's back, beseeching her in dumb show to keep quiet about last night's proceedings, and Norah obeying, only answered,

'O yes, plenty, thanks; and what I lost last night I certainly made up this morning. I don't think I ever slept so disgracefully late in my life.'

'Ahem!' from the corner of the room, where Peter, the only gentleman present, was supposed to be engrossed with a book.

'What's the matter, Peter?' inquired his sister. 'Are you suffering from a cold?'

'No; I only wished to recall to Miss Grant's recollection the fact that we must take her last statement on trust; however, I do sincerely hope that she does not spoil the peace and happiness of her home by the unpunctuality she has exhibited this morning.'

Peter was, as usual, suppressed, and had once more to retire into his book.

Fanny proposed soon that all who felt inclined should have a walk, in order to sweep the cobwebs of the dance from their brains.

'We might take the road round by the lake,' she said; 'it is not a long walk, and we should be home very soon after the post arrives, so you would not be long detained from your beloved letters, Norah.'

'There is very little chance of my getting any to-day; I heard from mother yesterday, and Madge has been lazy lately. I have not heard from her for more than a week, just before they left the seaside. The poor child has been suffering from severe headaches ever since their return; I hope there is not any serious cause for them.'

'O, I daresay not,' answered Fanny cheerily; 'the return to London after a month or two at the seaside is enough to make any one feel a little poorly just at first.'

'Have you only one sister,

Norah?' inquired Jim, as the girls went up-stairs together to prepare for their walk.

'Yes, only one; dear little Margaret,' and Norah's face lighted up as she spoke, 'all the more precious, I think, because she is an only sister; we are tremendous friends, despite the disparity in our ages. If you will come in here I will show you her photograph,' she added, as they reached her room.

Jim gladly entered, and Norah, opening an album, held it up for inspection.

'Here is Madge; isn't she a little beauty?'

Jim smiled as she examined the photograph.

'I like to hear you so openly admire your own sister; it is so horrid to see girls looking sheepish and silly when you admire any of their relations; just as if you were addressing some stupid piece of flattery to themselves!'

'Do they?' said Norah, laughing; 'it would never come into my head to seem astonished when people praise Madge's looks. Why, at home almost every day people tell me how pretty she grows, and I always agree with them. I should never think of doing anything else.'

'Well, from her photograph she must be very like you, consequently she is pretty!' said Jim, as she made off in haste.

Norah gave a loving glance at the photograph ere she proceeded to dress. There was, indeed, a strong resemblance between the sisters, only Norah was dark, and Madge fair, with curly hair like her sister's, but of a golden-brown colour; and while Norah looked healthy and strong, in Madge's eyes there was a pathetic expression, which told of not over-strong health. Fearing to be late, Norah hastened her movements,

and reached the hall just as the party, minus Percival and Mr. Ross, was preparing to start.

'Mr. Leicester has only just begun his breakfast, and Ned is staying to keep him company,' remarked Fanny as they set off. 'We will not wait for them; they can join us if they choose.'

Norah secretly hoped they would not.

'How is Miss Duff's headache?' she asked.

'I have just been to inquire, and I am sorry to say it is very bad just now; all her objections to dances have come back with renewed force in consequence.'

'Has Bijou got a headache too?' asked Peter, 'or is it merely sympathy that makes him keep his bed? I fancy, though, he must be in pain, for as I passed his door just now I heard low growls. Perhaps that leaf he demolished last night has not quite agreed with him,' and Peter's face lit up at the idea.

'To judge by his temper, I should think his indisposition must be *very* severe,' answered Fanny, laughing; 'for Ted entered his aunt's room just now, with the laudable intention of asking after her headache, and I met him in the passage flying as if for his life, Bijou having displayed an unpleasant desire to become better acquainted with the backs of my small son's legs!'

On returning to the house, they were met at the door by Mr. Ross, who was evidently waiting for them, and it struck Norah that he looked bothered and anxious.

'The letters have come,' he said rather hurriedly.

A quick fear shot through her heart.

'Is there anything for me?' and his answer of 'No, nothing,' relieved her of a weight of anxiety.

She could not explain the reason, but the presentiments of last night had increased rather than diminished, and Mr. Ross's anxious manner had filled her with a vague alarm.

'There are letters for all the rest of you,' he continued; 'I laid them on the dining-room table,' then, as they dispersed to get them, he said rather abruptly, 'Fanny, come here a minute; I want to speak to you.'

Norah caught his last words as she walked away.

'Poor Mr. Ross, he seems anxious about something,' she said to Jim, as the two girls, the only non-recipients of news, went upstairs together. 'Did you notice how strange his manner was just now?'

'Yes; I thought it seemed constrained and worried. I earnestly hope he has had no bad news. There was a sister of his in England ill a short time ago; I only hope she is not worse. Perhaps, though, we may have imagined he looked anxious; I trust so, I am sure. Be quick, and take your hat off, Norah; I want to have a good long chat with you before we leave this afternoon; come to my room when you are ready, if you feel so inclined,' and Jim departed.

Norah's room looked on the terrace in front, and fancying she heard footsteps under her window, she looked out. Yes, there they were, Mr. and Mrs. Ross, walking up and down engaged in earnest conversation. At intervals Norah caught glimpses of Fanny's face; it struck her as looking troubled. There *must* be something wrong, then. In a minute or two she saw that both Mr. and Mrs. Ross had reentered the house. Soon a footstep sounded along the passage, and at last stopped at Norah's door. 'Come in,' she

cried, in answer to the knock, thinking that bad news must have come for either Fanny or her husband, and that her friend had come to tell her of it.

Fanny gently opened and closed the door, and, without uttering a word, advanced to where Norah stood. There was an expression on her face, neither pity nor encouragement, but a mixture of both, which made Norah instinctively feel that she *had* bad news to tell, and that that news concerned herself.

"O Fanny, what is it? tell me quickly!" she cried entreatingly. "I can see there *is* something wrong by your face; indeed, I can bear anything, only tell me at once! O Fanny, is it mother? Is she—" and Norah's face blanched as she paused, unable to put her fears into words.

"No, darling, Mrs. Grant is quite well; it was she who sent the message. Norah, you *must* keep quiet; there," as she gently drew her down on to the sofa, "it is Madge, dear, who is ill, only *ill*, Norah," she repeated, for the girl's rigid white face frightened her; "and your mother has telegraphed to Ned that you must go home at once, for they want you. Don't you hear me, dear?"

Norah had risen hurriedly, and was pacing restlessly up and down the room. No tear had she shed, and Fanny trembled as she noticed the fixed look on her face. If she would only cry, or say something! Ah, but soon that restless walk ceased. Still open on the table was the album, which one short hour before Norah had been showing to Jim. Yes, there it lay, and as her eye rested on the beloved little face which she had seen last so full of health and spirits, waving good-bye to her from the door as they parted, the terrible thoughts

which imagination conjured up came before her, and dropping down on her knees beside the table, and hiding her face in her hands, the tears Fanny had hoped for came at last. She gently soothed and caressed her, but did not attempt to stop the tears, which she felt sure would bring relief; and she was right, for soon the long sobs ceased and Norah wept quietly for a few minutes. Presently, raising her head, she asked,

"O Fanny, why did not mother write to me? what does she say?"

"Dearest, it was not a letter, only a telegram; see, here it is: "Send Norah at once, Margaret is ill." Norah, we must hope for the best," as she saw a look of despair come over the girl's face again; "you see it does not say dangerously ill or even very ill. You know a telegram saves so much time, it takes so long for a letter to reach us up here; naturally, you must be much wanted at home, however slight the illness; and I daresay when you get there you may find Madge ever so much better."

"O Fanny, if you only knew her, she is such a little angel of a child, and it is always those who die first!" And though Norah spoke quietly, there was a sorrowful ring in her voice which made her listener's heart ache.

But she answered somewhat sharply, for she wanted to rouse Norah, "Don't speak in that way, dear; there are plenty of almost angel children who grow up into good men and women. Please God you will not be called upon to part with Madge. And, dear, if you give way like this, what sort of a nurse will you make? her recovery may depend much on that, you know. We have no time to lose, for Ned says your train goes at three, and you must

start from here soon after lunch. I will have your trunks brought, and Morton shall pack them. There, that's right,' as Norah rose wearily and began collecting together the various articles scattered about the room. 'Try only to look on the bright side and keep your heart up, dear.'

Poor Norah! she did honestly try to follow her friend's advice, though some quiet tears were shed before the lunch-bell rang. When there was nothing further to be done, she looked sadly round the dismantled room.

'Everything looks very forlorn, does it not, Fanny? I little thought I should have to say good-bye so soon! This is a sad ending to my visit.'

'Happy days are still in store for you, darling. See if I do not turn out a true prophetess. Now will you have a nice little lunch sent up here, or will you come down with me?'

'I will come down,' for she felt that if she remained alone in the dreary-looking room all the sad thoughts would come crowding round again. There is always a rather sad look about a room from which you are shortly about to take leave, even though it be for a little time. Everything pretty is packed away, and nothing meets your eye but the bare furniture, loose ends of paper, and untidy-looking odds and ends scattered about the floor. Still you have a love for your old room, and things connected with it, that always makes parting from it a little sorrowful.

As Fanny and Norah went down-stairs the first person they met was Geoffrey. He looked pityingly on Norah's pale face and heavy eyes, and almost upset the newly-acquired calm by saying, with a world of sympathy in his voice,

'I am so sorry, Miss Grant, so sorry. Ned has just told me you have heard bad news; I sincerely trust you will find your little sister better.'

Norah dared not trust her voice to answer, but she held out her hand gratefully. Geoffrey took it, and relinquished it after a moment, as though parting with some very precious thing. Poor child! the many kind words of sympathy she received from them all made it a very hard matter to keep back the ready tears. Percival's rather awkwardly-expressed condolence touched her most of all. He remained very quiet through lunch, when the others were trying to speak cheerily of the coming journey, and what time she would arrive in London. But after they had quitted the dining-room he found an opportunity of saying to her alone, colouring violently as he spoke, 'Miss Grant, I can't tell you how sorry I feel for you, and I want to ask you to forgive my having bothered you as I did last night. I was a cowardly dog to tease you after you had once said "No," and I wonder how I ever dared imagine the answer could have been anything else.'

Poor Percival! he had never seemed so manly and free from conceit as at that moment. Norah thanked him warmly for his sympathy, and said kindly,

'I hope that you and I shall always remain good friends, Mr. Leicester; pray don't think any more about last night; you and I are the only two persons who need ever know anything about it.'

At last the hour of parting came; the trunks had been carried down, and the family was all collected in the hall to see her off. Old Duncan had heard she was going, and had come up to the house expressly to wish her good-

bye. It was rather a queer farewell, his, and it made Norah blush and smile in spite of her trouble; taking her hand in both his rough ones, he said solemnly,

'May the Lord bless ye, mem, an' grant ye may find the wee leddie better; and may He soon send a braw husband in yer ain path, mem, for it's yersel' as is warthy o' the blessin'.'

His wishes came in all simplicity from his honest old heart, for he had a warm affection for 'Miss Nory.'

Farewells are hard things! Norah made a hurried visit to the nursery to take leave of her two pets there, and found it difficult to steady her voice, in answer to Teddy's innocent questions, 'Was her sister *very* bad? and was she going right away to heaven?'

And now the last farewells must be quickly hurried through, for she had a long drive before her, and would miss the train if she lingered. Fanny was waiting, ready to accompany her to the station; and with a hasty good-bye to all and a few kind words from each of her friends, Norah found herself in the carriage, driving quickly away from Robin Lodge. The group collected round the door lingered till the carriage was quite lost to sight, and then rather sadly dispersed.

'Poor little thing!' said Mr. Ross, as he reëntered the house, 'she has been brave and good; but if things go wrong with the sister, I don't know what either she or her mother will do. There have been many deaths in that family, and these remaining three are wrapt up in each other. We shall miss Miss Grant sadly, I am sure; she is a sweet little thing.'

'She is an angel!' exclaimed Percival, so vehemently that they all looked up astonished; and Geoffrey remembered the peep he had had into the conservatory last night. As he watched Norah's good-bye to Percival he had felt his last hope vanish, for she had purposely been very kind and gentle in her manner, and Geoffrey had formed his own opinion on the matter.

Jim and Peter had retired to prepare for their departure; Miss Duff still remained in her room, nursing Bijou and the sick headache. Miss Tennant, poor kind-hearted little thing, was weeping her eyes out from sheer sympathy with Norah and her troubles; and Geoffrey strolled listlessly about, thinking how unusually dark the rooms looked, and sadly missing one voice which had been as music to him during the last fortnight of his existence, for 'how sweetly sounds the voice of a good woman!'

(To be continued.)





I COULDN'T.
See the Verses.

LONDON SOCIETY.

FEBRUARY 1881.

ROMANTIC STORIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION: A MOST REMARKABLE WILL.

I.

PROFANE laymen believe that, when the cloth is removed at a lawyers' dinner, the oldest member of the profession present rises, and solemnly proposes, amid enthusiasm too deep for applause, this solemn toast—'The man who makes his own Will.' The story has, at any rate, the merit of being well invented; for most assuredly that man has a fool for his client in a double and treble meaning of the famous saying about men who are their own lawyers: and it is true enough, and I, an old lawyer, say it, with all respect for that science of common sense popularly called 'the law,' that the people who find their way into court, and learn what Costs mean, have mostly got into the predicament through having too strong an antipathy to lawyers and their bills. But I think it is even worse than common folly when a testator, mostly out of self-conceit, leaves a Chancery suit instead of an inheritance to his heirs. Women are not, in this respect, quite so criminally imbecile as men are, because they are mostly free from the little knowledge which is at the root of most bad wills. But then they are apt to make a more thorough hash of things when

they make any at all. On the whole, I should place makers of their own wills in the following order of badness, taking the extreme type in each degree of comparison: *Positive*—Bad, Elderly Gentlemen. *Comparative*—Worse, Elderly Ladies. *Superlative*—Worst, Lord Chancellors. But not even a Lord Chancellor ever managed to draw up so extraordinarily bewildering a will as Miss Bridgita Molloy. She could have taught something even to the late Lord W——y. As the case never actually came into court, the details will probably be new to most of my readers; but I heard them all at the time, and have the clearest recollection of them—and no wonder. On this occasion there is no harm in giving real names. And that is fortunate; for the story could not possibly be told without them. It simply defies invention.

Miss Bridgita Molloy was a maiden lady of royal descent, who lived at an English watering-place—I really forget whether at Bath, or Clifton, or Cheltenham, or Malvern, or Leamington, or Buxton; but it was at some such place, and luckily the name of the town is the one detail which does not matter. For the sake of

avoiding blanks and dashes, I will call it Chatterbury, as more or less applicable to them all—at least, in Miss Molloy's time. She was a little eccentric in trifles ; but, in all essential things, as notoriously whole-minded, and strong-minded too, as any lady of sixty in the whole kingdom. I must enter a little into her family history ; but only so far as is needful. She had been the second of three beautiful sisters, the daughters and coheirresses of a gentleman of large estate in Ireland. They were much run after in their girlhood, and had once been known as the three pocket-beauties—less in allusion to their size than to their reputation—then somewhat uncommon in Dublin—of being worth marrying for something more lasting than beauty. Well, to cut a long story short before it is well begun, the eldest, Miss Lucis Molloy (a quaint first name ; but it always struck me as a singularly pretty one for a pretty girl), eloped with a gentleman, also descended from royalty—so far descended, indeed, that there was scarcely a further social depth left him to descend to—named Fitzgerald O'Birn ; and the youngest, Miss Judith, went off with a foreign refugee, a sort of Hungarian-German-Polish dancing-master Count, named Ferentz Steldl. Ferentz is the Hungarian for Francis, I believe ; Steldl, I fancy, is Bavarian or Tyrolese. Both marriages turned out miserably—so miserably, that Miss Bridgita forswore romance, and even matrimony, and actually kept her vow.

She also kept more than her vow—she kept her fortune. When the creditors got hold of Mr. Molloy's great estates, he left the very handsome surplus left him in cash and Consols absolutely to his one wise daughter. Not a

penny went into the pockets of Count Steldl or Mr. O'Birn. It was a bitter disappointment to both gentlemen ; and I believe they avenged their wrongs upon their wives after the manner of their kind.

So while poor Madame Steldl suffered and starved all over Europe, and poor Mrs. O'Birn starved and suffered in the larger and darker continent of London, Miss Molloy lived alone and in dignified opulence at Chatterbury. She was a first-rate economist, and her patrimony had prospered. She used to amuse herself by speculating in stock—always shrewdly and cautiously. By the time she was sixty, it was reckoned that her income could not amount to less than a safe twelve hundred a year, of which she saved at least five.

Now what in the world was to become of all this money if Miss Bridgita Molloy ever happened to die ? I have been thinking of the best form in which I can tell the story of what did happen shortly ; and I think it best, on the whole, to undergo a transformation, and multiply the result by two. That is to say, I will henceforth speak as if I were myself Miss Molloy's solicitor, my old friend, the late Charles Lake of Chatterbury ; and I will, in addition, use the privilege accorded to authors and to counsel of speaking after the facts, and so of putting them into clearer and more readable form than if I followed them in order of detail. So, for the present, instead of being your correspondent, Mr. Editor, Mr. Thomas Key, formerly of Burgham, I will, for the nonce, write to you in the person of Mr. Charles Lake of Chatterbury, a very dry matter-of-fact man of business indeed, who told the tale as it was told to me.

II.

ONE afternoon the mail-coach from London set down two gentlemen at the Old Swan, Chatterbury. Both had remarkably little luggage for those days, when men could not run from York to London and back again in a few hours. Both ordered a bed, both walked into the coffee-room, and one of them rang the bell. When the waiter answered it, one of the gentlemen ordered cold brandy, the other hot whisky. And the waiter's report at the bar was not favourable to either. But with that opinion lack of luggage may have had something to do.

There were other resemblances between the two men. Both were well past middle age; neither looked like one of the hunting men, or officers on half-pay, or rheumatic patients, who formed the bulk of the male visitors to Chatterbury. But there all likeness came to an end. He of the whisky was a long lean man, with fierce untrimmed whiskers, a shiny bald head, bloodshot blue eyes, and a tell-tale nose, dressed in the height of the fashion, with a tendency to overstepping it into loudness. He had ordered his grog in a thick rich brogue. He of the brandy, on the other hand, was short and squat, with a dirty sallow complexion, thick grizzled hair, and twinkling black eyes. He wore the then unusual ornament, if ornament it be, of a moustache; and, for the rest, was clean, or rather half, shaved, and there was something Frenchified about his costume.

'Waither!' said the Irishman. 'If anybody calls here to-dee or to-morrow for Mejor O'Birn,—I'm Mejor O'Birn!'

The other started for a moment, and laid his glass down.

'Shall I comprehend, Mon-

sieur,' he asked, 'that you give your name?'

'Me name? And why wouldn't I give me name?' said O'Birn, with a little leap in his chair. 'Tis none to be ashamed of, anyhow. I'd like to see the man with a name to his back as good as O'Birn!'

'One hundred thousand pardons, Monsieur. I am glad that I know—that is all. Eh, but one thousand thousand pardons, Monsieur Fitzgerald O'Birn.'

The Major's jaw fell, and all his face, save his nose, grew suddenly pale.

'Sure, now, ye're not goin' to tell me ye're one of thim blagyard Jews!' cried he. 'Sure 'twould be too crool an' all, when I've come down to see me own wife's sither, that's rollin' over and over in jools an' gold. An' ye've followed me all the wee down here; an' this is a free country! An' bad luck to the country where an officer an' gentleman mustn't pee a visit to his wife's relations without being hunted by all Jerusalem in full cry! Come, Moses, ye'll give me another dee.'

'Aha! So you think no one shall know your name but the people which shall hold your bills, Monsieur O'Birn? I hold not your bills; I am not fool. You come down to see Mdle. Bridgita, then, I shall comprehend?'

'Sure, then, 'tis the divvle ye are! But that's better, anyhow, than bein' what I thought ye—'

'You shall not be so sure, Monsieur. I shall know your Christian name, and I shall know the Christian name of the sister of your wife, because I am Ferentz Steldl, Monsieur O'Birn! Aha! you shall have the tremblement perceptible, Monsieur O'Birn!'

'Hwhat!' cried the Major, leaping to his feet, with a shout and a glare. 'Ye sit there in cold

blood, and ye tell me, Meior Fitzgerald O'Birn, ye're that—miscreant—that blagyard—that snake in the grass—that drinkin', swindlin', mane-spirited, undher-handed, slandherin', murderin', onrespectable thief of the whole world, Ferentz Steldl? And ye think to escape from the fist of a gentleman this dee?

'Patience, patience, *mon beau-frère*,' said Steldl, without the slightest change of tone. 'Fine words shall not butter what you call the *panais*. It is you who shall escape from me. You shall leave this town. I shall guard Mdle. Molloy, sister of my wife, aunt of my son, from you. For that I am here.'

Something in the significant calmness of his foreign brother-in-law calmed the Major down. He returned to his chair, shifted his glass on the table, and said,

'An' 'tis for that I'm here too,' said he. 'I'm here to defend me own sisther, an' me wife's sister, an' me gurl's aunt, from all the Counts out of Hungary an' the Siven Dyles. An' ye'll move from your sate if ye dare.'

'I shall not desire,' said Steldl. 'I am well where I am. I desire to have the eye on you, my *beau-frère*. While you shall sit there, I shall sit here, if it shall be to the death, Monsieur O'Birn. It shall be the duel *à la mort*, Monsieur, and we shall fight with the bottoms of the chairs.'

'Then, faith, I'll sit like the hen of Banagher—an' she sat till the sod undher her began to crow. So ye think Miss Biddy'll open the crack of her door to the likes of you?'

'Why not? She is sister of my wife, and aunt of my son.'

'Aunt of my daughter, ye mane. Poh! what'd she know of a son of yours?'

'You mock of yourself, my

beau-frère. Have she not buy my son Ferentz the commission of the Foot, and keep him, so long he see not me?'

'Then ye lie in your throat, Ferentz Steldl! 'Tis me own daughter, an' her own goddaughter an' niece, Lucis Bridgita, that she's kept at school at her own charge, an' keeps in pocket-money as long as I don't see her more than woonst a year.'

'She do that for *your* daughter? Impossible, Monsieur!'

'She do that for *your* son? Mr. Steldl, ye lie!'

The way in which these two gentlemen quarrelled, without showing the least sign of coming to blows, gave the waiter, who was not far off, an altogether fresh view of the possibilities of human nature. Obviously there was a world in which gentlemen cared more for their physical than their moral skins.

'Take yourself off, my *beau-frère*. In effect, she adopt Ferentz, my son. She leave all to him.'

'Ye're a fool, Steldl—that's what she's been makin' of ye, the old screw o' the world! As if she'd lave a penny to any but her own niece Lucis, afther doin' all she has for the darlin' child!'

Steldl was the sort of man who would be given to shrugging his shoulders, like a Frenchman in a play: so he no doubt did so now. 'She cannot have done so much for Miss Lucis, or I shall have hear. I know not till now she have done so much for the daughter of the black sheep; but what shall a school-bill be, after all? Bah!—a bagatelle. But a commission in the Foot—ah, that is another shoe! And you consent not to see your own flesh and blood for the sake of a bill of a school!'

'I'm a betther sort of a father than to sthand in me own child's

wee of a fortune. And ye sit there an' tell me she's spent the price of a commission on *your* son — unless 'tis in the Marines, where they'll believe the tale.'

'*Parole de gentilhomme*, Monsieur O'Birn, I am father of Ferentz Steldl, lieutenant of King George—'

'And I of Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, that'll be in the shoes of Miss Molloy.'

The two fathers emptied their tumblers, and the Major rang for more. Neither meant to lose this sitting match if he could help it, that was clear.

'If I didn't know,' said Steldl slowly and impressively, 'there is no school in the land who shall teach for no pay, I shall not believe. But she shall but toss one bone to one hungry dog—that shall be all.'

Now Major O'Birn, though he had never met his brother-in-law in the flesh before, was a citizen of that world which knew that the refugee had taught fencing in his time, and had won several bets that he would make a bullet mark out a pack of cards. So, instead of retorting with a charge of hot whisky into his brother-in-law's yellow face, he contented himself by saying, with an angry grin,

'An' what'll ye say when I tell ye *my* wife is with her own sither this very dee, as thick as bees in a hive?'

The Irishman, though he had kept his temper the worst, won the match after all. Steldl leapt from his chair with a volley of language that proved his own temper to be no deeper than the thinnest part of his skin.

'*Your* wife, you fortune-hunting Irish beggar? *Your* wife with Miss Molloy? So that's why you've been keeping me here?' He threw the rest of his liquor into the fire, and sent a blaze up the

chimney. Then he buttoned his coat defiantly, saying, '*I* will see Miss Molloy.'

'An' that's what I call mighty waste of good drink,' said Major O'Birn, gulping down the remainder of his own. 'Yes, ye may go, Steldl. I won't bother even to see her door shut in your face—though, faith, it would be fun.'

'And I tell you, Monsieur,' cried Steldl, raising his voice into a sort of scream, 'that it is *my* wife which is now with Miss Molloy!'

The two husbands glared at one another fiercely. And, short of running the risk of being knocked down by the other, that was all left them to do. Words had done their worst; and they were evidently not men of deeds.

No; Miss Bridgita Molloy had not turned out a bad sister after all. She would never even acknowledge so much as the existence of the Major and the Count, and had an odd way of speaking of the married Miss Molloys as if they were widows; but she did not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. At a very early age, too early for them to make a deliberate choice between their father and their fortunes, she had sent both the little Ferentz and the little Lucis Bridgita to good schools, and, as they grew bigger, sometimes had them to Chatterbury for the holidays to meet their mothers, who accepted the arrangement more reasonably than mothers always will. For that matter, neither Count nor Major cared to be bothered with a baby, nor always with a wife, so that the two young children were removed from evil influence as much as lay in Miss Molloy's power. She was a very strict aunt and a terribly exacting patroness; but she meant to be kind, and was really kind in her own

way. I never saw much of the children, but I liked what I did see. Ferentz was a fine, frank, high-spirited young fellow, without any of his father's vices, as is often the way with the sons of prodigal fathers, and Lucis was almost as pretty as her mother had been when she eloped with the Major. Rather a quiet girl, I used to think, but amiable, and with a dash of her aunt Biddy's good sense about her way of speaking. But it was one of Miss Molloy's caprices that the left hand which she held out to one sister should know nothing of how the right hand was held out to the other. Neither mother, neither child was ever her guest at the same time as the other mother and the other child. I doubt if Ferentz knew that he had a cousin Lucis, or she that she had a cousin Ferentz. Most assuredly each of the mothers believed that she alone was favoured with her sister's bounty. That reserve was one of Miss Molloy's very strongest foibles, if one may properly call a foible strong. She would never tell even me, her lawyer, more than she thought absolutely necessary about anything; and so of course even she, with all her good business qualities, would sometimes make little mistakes out of which I found it difficult to help her.

And the same course that she pursued with her lawyer she followed with her doctor too—that is to say, with a certain doctor who happened to be a personal friend; for she used to boast that she had never had a medicine-bottle in the house but once, and that she had thrown out of window. She often said that she had nothing of a coffin about her but the strength of its nails; and yet the very first time she was compelled to send for her medical friend in a pro-

fessional capacity, he found that she must have been suffering for years from a most painful internal and organic disease, and a fatal one. How do hungry relations always hear such news? Had she made her Will? If not, would she recognise the fact that the nature of her disease admitted of no delay? And so, for the first time, Mrs. O'Birn and Mrs. Stedl, at the expense of their husbands' creditors, flew on the wings of sisterly affection, and met together at Miss Molloy's bedside. And, with the instinct of vultures, the Count and the Major had been unable to keep from hovering, as near as they dared, within the shadow of a death that meant so much to them. Neither, I firmly believe, had until that meeting the faintest suspicion that, if only a proper will were made, he would not become the father of Miss Molloy's sole heir. That discovery that her generosity had not been monopolised by either must have been a deservedly bitter moment for both the greedy blackguards. And, for all their brag, each knew that he dared no more knock at Miss Molloy's door than he dared commit assault and battery; while, for aught each could tell, the other might be high in the favour of the poor lady who was dying a few streets away.

It was—for it must have been—a strange meeting between the two forlorn, faded, worse than widowed, half-childless women by the deathbed of one who to them had for many years represented strength, health, comfort—all that they had wanted since they were girls together long and long ago. There they had to sit, one on each side of the bed, conscious of a question she had been commanded by her tyrant to ask, conscious that the other was similarly burdened, unable to ask it in the

other's presence, not daring nor knowing how to ask it had she been alone by the bedside. For I declare that even I myself would sooner have led a forlorn hope than have asked Miss Molloy what she meant to do with her money. I like to think of the dismay of the two husbands, but I don't in pity like to think of what the two poor wives must have suffered in silence that afternoon.

I had already—I need not tell anybody who knows places like Chatterbury—been put in the position of being able to report the conversation between the two gentlemen in the coffee-room. They had not spoken in whispers, and the Old Swan had key-holes and its waiter had ears. So I was not very much surprised when, in the course of the evening, I received a summons to attend Miss Molloy.

'Ah?' said her doctor, who was dining with me when the summons came. I report the exclamation, because it was meant to mean a great deal.

'I hope and trust I find you better, Miss Molloy,' said I, when I was shown into her bedroom, which she had not left for some weeks now.

'No, Mr. Lake, I don't,' said she. 'I didn't believe I was a dying woman three hours ago, but I do now. Don't say anything stupid. I've not lived such a bad life that I'm afraid; and I've never been afraid to face anything in my life, except marriage, and I'm not going to begin now.' She was right; with all her little oddities she had been really a good, if somewhat hard-mannered, woman, and always a singularly brave one. 'I know I'm dying, because the hawks and kites are abroad. We used to keep a banshee in the old times, and it's something between

a Count and a Major. Those poor silly sisters of mine have been here bothering me to make my will. And if you don't know what that means, Mr. Lake, I do. It means death, as sure as I'm lying here.'

'You mean to say that your sisters have mentioned such a thing?'

It was really not a case for common phrases. Miss Molloy was—Miss Molloy.

'Not in words—no, poor things. But there they sat and cried, and there was nothing but Will—Will—Will, in every tear. 'Tisn't them I blame, though 'tis not nice to be cried over that way. 'Twas as much as I could do not to say Won't—Won't—Won't; but I've always had the wit to hold my tongue. Ah, Mr. Lake, since then I've been thinking how maybe 'tis better to have somebody to drop a real tear over your own self, if 'tis half brandy, and from a Count or a Major, than to have lived in peace only to die all alone. But that's fool's talk; and I didn't ask ye not to talk like a stupid that ye might listen the better to a fool.'

'Surely,' said I, 'you are not alone. Lieutenant Steldl—Miss O'Birn—'

'Pooh! who remembers a dead aunt for a whole day, I'd like to know? Would I want to make a boy and a girl cry before their own troubles come? 'Tis business I sent ye for. There's pens and paper. I *am* going to make my will.'

'I am sure you are right in that. I am entirely at your service, Miss Molloy.'

'Then,' said she, 'I want you to draw my will *now*. No instructions, mind, to be drafted to-morrow. I might be dead by then—who knows? My pain's almost left me; and that's a bad sign, if

death's a bad thing. It will be very short and very simple. Take a sheet of the big foolscap—that'll be plenty. Now write, *This is the last Will and Testament of Bridgita*—mind ye spell it with a *ta*, not a *da*; and with only one *t*, mind; for I'm particular about that way, for 'tis the way my mother spelt it, right or wrong—*of Bridgita Molloy, of Chatterbury, in the county of*—whatever it was—*spinster*: praise glory for that, anyhow! But ye needn't put that in—the glory, I mean.—*Spinster: I give and bequeath to Rachel Andrews, my housekeeper, the sum of three hundred pounds, free of legacy duty, and I request her to take charge of my dog Dash, knowing that she will fulfil my request according to the intention wherewith I make the same. I give and bequeath to every person who shall have been in my service for one month preceding my decease the amount of one year's wages. I give and bequeath to my friend John Kirwan, of Chatterbury, Doctor of Medicine, the sum of five hundred pounds, free of legacy duty. I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Ferentz Steldl the elder—is it all right, so far?*

'Quite. But how do you spell Ferentz?' asked I.

'*F, e, r, e, n, t, z*—Ferentz Steldl. The boy's name is Firentz, with an *i*. I won't have him bear his father's name.—*My brother-in-law, Ferentz Steldl the elder, the sum of one shilling, free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning-ring. I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Fitzgerald O'Birn, the sum of one shilling, free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning-ring. I give and bequeath to my dear nephew, Firentz—with an i—Steldl, Lieutenant in the Army, the sum of one thousand pounds. I give and bequeath to Lucie Bridgita O'Birn, my niece, the sum of one thousand*

pounds. And all the residue of my property, whether real or personal, I give, bequeath, and devise to—'

She paused. Up to this point she had not needed my help, so expert she seemed in the art of the testator.

'*Devise to,*' echoed I. 'Well, Miss Molloy? The residuary legatee was to be the important personage; for he or she would come in for at least twenty-five thousand pounds, and perhaps a good deal more, after all debts and legacies were paid.

But still she paused. All the rest had been mere child's play.

'Mr. Lake,' she said at last, 'I may be dying, but I'm not an old woman, and I might live for years. Now my sisters are gone, I feel less like dying than I did when I sent for ye to make my will. I've done all the justice I need do; and I don't want a handsome property to be split up—that would be a sort of a shame. Neither Firentz nor Lucie has any expectation of getting what I have to leave, whatever others may. It's for the sake of the property that it must go into one hand. And, Mr. Lake, I daren't trust the very walls of my bedroom with the name I choose. If I was to ask you to write the name in my will, I should have to speak it to you, and for aught I know the Count or the Major may have bribed the nurse to listen at that very door.'

'Write it down for me, then; here is the pen.'

'No. The paper might get dropped about, and—no; I'd rather you wouldn't know the name. It isn't that I don't trust ye, but ye might say it out in a dream, and your wife might hear it, and she might let it out by some chance to somebody who might talk about it in a place like Chatterbury, and then the Count or the Major would

get at the secret as sure as ye're alive. And then there's no counting the villanies that wouldn't be done; they'd be trying to get me shut up in a madhouse, and forging and murdering some one maybe; anyhow, there'd be no comfort in living, if I am to live any more. I've thought of a way to keep off all danger, and to make it everybody's interest to support the will, and to save every bit of bother. I'll write the name myself in the will with my own hand, and then cover it over while ye write the rest, and ye'll give me your word of honour ye won't try to see what I've written till I'm dead and gone.'

The whim was a stupid one, I thought, for a testator who was in other respects proving herself so clear-headed; but there was certainly no apparent harm in indulging her. 'But,' said I, 'as you wish to take such extreme precautions, does it not strike you that it is easier for an expectant heir to overhaul a will than for a solicitor to break confidence in a dream?'

'I've thought of all that,' said she. 'Of course they'll try to overhaul, and where there's a will there's a way—but there's more ways of killing a dog than hanging him. I'll manage so that if every servant in the house is in the Count's pay or the Major's, they shall earn their money for nothing at all. So I'll take the pen, if ye please, and the will; give me a dip of ink, and any scrap of paper ye find handy.'

I gave her all she asked for. She first of all, very slowly, wrote down upon the scrap of paper what was presumably a rough draft of what she was going to enter in the will. Then she copied it into the document even yet more slowly, dwelling, as it seemed, upon every letter. Her

hand must have grown feeble before her brain, or else, like all testators of the fussy sort who look on will-making as a solemn function, she could not bring herself to let a paltry minute settle the destination of five-and-twenty thousand pounds. I have known men and women who would have made the labour of writing the two or three needful words last the better part of a day.

She thrust the scrap of paper on which she had made her first memorandum under her pillow, and then carefully folded the will itself so that I could see nothing without deliberately breaking my word. Dr. Kirwan and myself were appointed executors; and the execution of the will was witnessed by the nurse and a neighbour. There was certainly nothing remarkable about Miss Molloy's Will so far but the excessive care she had taken that its principal provision should not even be guessed at until she died.

Nor did Miss Molloy die quite so soon as everybody had expected. The Count and the Major, finding a protracted stay at the Old Swan beyond their means, had parted, deadly enemies—all the more deadly because each inspired the other with a feeling of mortal terror. I am very much afraid that both Mrs. Steldl and Mrs. O'Birn had to bear, at her husband's hands, the burden of punishment for the sins of her brother-in-law. But, however that may be, the day came at last when I heard from Dr. Kirwan the long-expected news that my client, Miss Bridgita Molloy, was alive no more.

'She couldn't have lasted another week,' said he. 'But, all the same, I might have kept her going for another day or two, with care. Would you believe it, but

the obstinate old lady, only the night before last, gave her nurse the slip, and, weak as she was, went all over the house to see if everything was in order ! Death was a relief to her, and she was a queer old lady in some ways—and the worst patient in all the town—but I'm sorry she's gone.'

And that, I am afraid, was the only note of honest mourning which Miss Molloy, with all her many virtues and her singularly few weaknesses, was privileged to receive. She had always hidden her good qualities out of public sight; and hardness of manner, like charity, covers a great deal.

To the last she had stuck to her will. It was found under her pillow when she died, sealed up in a large blue envelope, and indorsed '*My Will—B. M.*' I own it was with some curiosity that I opened it; for she had made such a mystery of what should have been a very simple piece of business, that I had some misgivings lest she should have disinherited niece and nephew alike, and made her dog Dash or some Anti-Matrimonial Society her residuary legatee. My own sympathies were with Miss Lucis; my wife's with Lieutenant Ferentz Steldl. That was a little matter of human nature; as a matter of reason, we felt that they had equal claims, and that twenty-five thousand pounds would have borne equal partition very well.

So I broke open the envelope, unfolded the will, and read :

' And all the residue of my property, whether real or personal, I give, bequeath, and devise to G P X D N W M D Y B D O V J W D M I H T I D Z X Z.'

III.

THAT was the bequest—as clear to the sight as it was dark to the mind. Had I been mistaken, and had Miss Molloy been insane after all? If that were so, every penny of the five-and-twenty thousand pounds would have to be divided between the Count and the Major as the husbands of her next of kin. No, surely *that* insanity was impossible.

I twisted the document up and down, and round and round. Those letters still obstinately remained as they were; the alphabet, at any rate, had gone mad, unless it was I who had gone insane. I needed some evidence of my own senses, and carried the will straight to my co-executor, Dr. Kirwan.

'She was an odd old lady!' said he at last. 'But I'll bear witness in any court you like that she was as sane as anybody that ever made a will.'

'But what's to be done?'

'Ah, what indeed? What's the effect of this will, as it stands?'

'I'm just hanged if I know. The will's otherwise without a flaw. And in all my practice, and all my reading too, I never heard of the alphabet's being made a residuary legatee. I don't like to say, without consideration, that there's no principle a court of equity would go upon; but I don't know of one. I don't see even how it would come within the doctrine of *Cy Pres*.'

'What's that?'

'Why, that when the conditions of a gift can't be literally carried out, the Court of Chancery will decree some method conformable to the general object, and following the intentions of the donor as nearly as possible.'

'Then,' said Dr. Kirwan, 'I should say the Court would apply

the estate to the foundation of a college for the study of conundrums. But—holloa, Lake, here's something else dropped out of the envelope; perhaps it's the answer. It's a letter addressed to you.'

That, also, was sealed. When I opened it, I found only these words:

'If you are puzzled, lift up the carpet in the drawing-room in the corner between the fireplace and window, under the chifonier.—B. M.'

'Aha!' said the doctor. 'A cipher, and the key. Let's go at once, and see. But—how would that affect the will?'

'It is a most ridiculous thing to have done,' I said, really angry and annoyed. 'I wish to Heaven I had known that *that* was what she was up to. I'm afraid there may be trouble.'

'Won't a will in cipher be allowed?'

'I hope so. The Court of Chancery will rectify a clear mistake or omission in a will, if it is apparent on the face of the will. And even parol evidence will be admitted in case of mistake in the name or description of a legatee. We shall have better than parol evidence in a written key; and the mistake of naming and describing the legatee, whoever he or she may be, by G P X, and so forth, is as apparent on the face of the will as a misdescription can possibly be. The key will, I hope, be evidence enough to show what Miss Molloy intended. But I'm sadly afraid that into Chancery it will have to go, and our friends the Count and the Major will have a few words to say to it if it once gets there. Of anything really wrong I'm not afraid; but of trouble I am. I'll have a good read in Jarman when I get home. But now for the drawing-room corner.'

We went together straight to the house of the late Miss Molloy, and, according to our instructions, turned up the carpet in the corner of the drawing-room. Sure enough we found another sealed note addressed to me.

'Look,' we read, 'at page 173 in the second volume of Gibbon's "*Decline and Fall*." It is on a shelf in the breakfast-room.—B. M.'

I was too vexed at all this folly and mystification to smile.

'By Jupiter!' exclaimed the doctor, 'this accounts for that midnight ramble over her house just before she died. She was writing these notes and hiding them. Poor old lady—it's not an uncommon thing, though, for people on their deathbeds to fancy themselves surrounded by spies and enemies. It isn't lunacy, though, eh?'

'But it's the cause of lunacy in others,' grumbled I. 'Well, now for Gibbon.'

And there, exactly on page 173 of volume ii., was yet a third sealed note for me. And this ran:

'Key behind wainscot three inches towards cupboard from dressing-room window.—B. M.'

'At last!' said I. 'I was afraid we were going to be sent up all the chimneys before we'd done.'

'By Jupiter, Lake, just think what would have happened if there'd been one link missing; if one of these pillar-to-post notes had been lost or gone out of the way!'

'It's too terrible a chance to talk of. It would have cost one of those young people near twelve hundred a year. Come, here's the dressing-room; let's be quick and have done with the whole thing.'

'All right; here's a loose board, just where we were told to go. Come, out with you! Hold a match

down, this is rather a dark hole. There—and here's—holloa !'

Dr. Kirwan pulled out a fragment of an envelope to which the red sealing-wax still clung, and on which I could read a part of my own name. There were also some odds and ends of *blank* paper scattered round. We pulled out all that was there. Alas, the fate of the key was only too plainly to be learned from the torn and half-eaten scraps of envelope and note-paper we found.

A scuttering and scrambling behind the wainscot mocked us with the certainty that the Mice had swallowed the Key !

IV.

WHAT was to be done now? The mice alone knew to whom Miss Bridgita Molloy's money belonged. Try to realise the circumstances now, as I had to realise them then. There was a will—a good will—and yet a will of which all the Equity lawyers on earth would be unable to make head or tail. And not one breath or sign of her intentions had Miss Molloy let fall even to Dr. Kirwan or to me. And there were the Count and the Major waiting for their prey.

The letters of the alphabet took to waltzing with the multiplication table in my dreams. I did not know what to do. I got a box of ivory letters and tried all sorts of anagrams, but could make nothing out of five-and-twenty letters, with only four vowels among them, and with so many *z*'s and *x*'s. I proved the will in fear and trembling, fully expecting that the question of the soundness of the mind of the testatrix would be immediately raised by one or both of her brothers-in-law, who had of

course been made aware of the contents, and were in possession of those letters without meaning. But, strange to say, no steps were taken whatever. It was not for a week, at least, after the will had been proved that I received a visit from Steldl the elder, accompanied by a dapper and smartly dressed young man, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Withers, from the office of Withers & King. I supposed he was the legal adviser of the Steldl claim.

'You shall wonder, Mr. Lake,' said the Count, 'why I not think Miss Molloy what you call mad woman. Not at all. I think of that once ; but then that give half the money to that vermin, Fitzgerald O'Birn, who shall lose it in every vile way. I say it shall be a good will. I take advice, I ; and I demand you pay all what shall be left to my son, Ferentz Steldl—'

'Wait a bit,' said I. 'He has already received his legacy of a thousand pounds.'

'Bah ! what shall be one thousand pound? He is what you call Residuary Legatee of Miss Molloy.'

'I wish he were, with all my heart ! But we must go to Chancery. There's nothing else to be done.'

'No. He shall not go in Chancery. He shall have his right and his due. I am his father, Monsieur.'

'When you can read those confounded letters into Ferentz Steldl, I'll pay him every penny with all my heart, and take the consequences ; but not a minute before.'

'Very good, Mr. Lake. Then I shall read them into Ferentz Steldl, and without magic ; and then you shall pay. Now, Mr. Withers, if you please.'

'Mr. Withers is your solicitor, I presume?'

'I have not the honour,' said Mr. Withers glibly, 'to be in the profession—in *your* profession, sir, that is to say. We are a firm of professional experts, sir. We practise the science of autography, and we collect and deal in the autograph letters of celebrated historical persons. Naturally our business has occasionally included the branch of cryptography—of the construction and solution of ciphers, which, though requiring a certain special aptitude as well as experience, is not so difficult as laymen might suppose, and is as certain in its results as arithmetic itself—beautifully certain, sir. Our friend Mr. Stedl has applied to me for the missing key of this little puzzle, and it took me barely half an hour's study to find.'

'You mean you can read this jumble into sense?' asked I. 'You must be a clever fellow, Mr. Withers. How am I to know it isn't guess-work? The correctness of your reading will have to be proved, you see.'

'Up to the hilt, sir. The beauty of a cipher, or cryptograph, is that, if you once hit on the right key, it can only mean just that one thing—no doubt, no ambiguity. And as the discovery of the key is a logical process, and as no cipher can possibly have more than one key, why, sir, *solvitur ambulando*—the result is proved by the process, sir; or rather, result and process prove one another.'

'Then I must have your process, if you please.'

'To be sure. No patent. Anybody can do it. This cipher, sir, is even absurdly simple. Did you ever read the *Gold Bug* of Edgar Allan Poe? No? That's a pity, because I shall have to explain from the beginning. I

have rather a contempt for that story—the cipher he makes his hero discover would have been found out by a child in half the time. And this cipher before us is of precisely the same kind—the very simplest form of cipher known.'

'Well?'

'A person like Miss Molloy, presumably ignorant of the beautiful science of cryptography, would be almost certain to adopt the plan of making one letter do duty for another. Of course she has left no spaces between her words. Now, you know that the commonest English letter is *e*; so that, ten to one, the commonest letter in the cipher will represent *e*. That letter is *d*. It comes no fewer than five times in the twenty-five. So, ten to one, *d* stands for *e*. You perceive?'

'At any rate, I follow, so far.'

'Very good, sir. Now look at the cipher well, and keep it before your eyes. We'll assume for the moment that *d* may mean *e*; and if *d* means *e*, it's likely enough *a* would be *b*, *b* would be *c*, and so on, and so on, taking the letter following. Let's try that dodge with *m*, because there's more than one *m*, and because *n* (which it ought to stand for) is a commonish sort of letter. Very well. Putting *e* for *d* and *n* for *m* and dots for the other letters, we get,
... *e* . . . *ne* . . . *e* *en* *e* . . .

Now, Mr. Lake, the question, as I understand it, is—Did Miss Molloy leave her money to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, or to Ferentz Stedl? Assuming that one of those *e*'s must fall into where the name of the legatee must come, it will strike you at once that there isn't one single *e* in the *lady's* name. It will also strike you that the young gentleman is a *nephew*, and that we've got already *ne*—coming together. Let's

chance it. Let's write *nephew* right out, and see if we get sense that way. It'll come like this, putting *p* for *y*, *h* for *b*, *w* for *o* :
 . . . *e . . nephew . . en . . . e . .*

Now, what strikes you next, sir ?

'Nothing whatever, Mr. Withers. Nothing at all.'

'No ? I'm surprised. Doesn't it strike you that *en* comes in Ferentz ; that the cipher and the name of Steldl both end in a letter between a pair of letters—*xxz* : *ldl* ? A most remarkable hint, indeed ; for it interferes with no former assumption—*z* would mean *l* : *x* would mean *d*. Now look how it reads :

. . . *e . r nephew f . rentz steldl*
 Only one thing bothers me. Where the dot comes now in *f . rentz* there ought to be a *d* to represent an *e*. In reality there's a *j*. But that's a trifle ; doubtless a clerical error. The whole thing's as plain as a pikestaff. Substituting letter for letter, and never mixing them, here you are :

my dear nephew Ferentz Steldl,
and there you are !

I was certainly surprised at the fellow's ingenuity. Except for that missing *e*, the process was without a flaw ; and when we see a logical and faultless process arriving at a probable conclusion, what are we to say ? And, by Jove ! Miss Molloy *had made a particular point of spelling Ferentz, Firentz*—with an *i*. Look back at the draft of the will, and see. That was downright proof, if any was needed ; the *j* in the cipher, hitherto unaccounted for, would be *i*. The very simple little process had all the air of a miracle to me. I knew nothing then of the far greater marvels wrought by antiquarians in rougher and larger fields, or I should, perhaps, have been less surprised.

'It is read, Monsieur,' said Steldl père, with a bow.

I was a little sorry for Miss Lucis ; but I didn't grudge her cousin his good luck, and I was intensely relieved. I was thinking of the effect of all this as evidence, Steldl was looking at me in dignified triumph, Mr. Withers was regarding his success with artistic pride, when my clerk brought in a card—*Major Fitzgerald O'Birn*.

I thought best to have everything out and over then and there ; so, without considering the presence of his brother-in-law and enemy, I had him ushered in.

'Good-dee to ye, Mr. Lake,' said he, without deigning to notice, or even to see, Mr. Steldl, who, for his part, threw a double dose of benignity into his smile. 'I suppose ye've been wondherin' why I didn't go in for provin' poor Miss Biddy *non compos*—wake in the top, ye know. As if I'd consent to go halves with a dirthy, mane, intriguing baste of a fellow that she'd cut off with a shilling with her own hand ! All or none—that's the war-cry of the O'Birns ! So I've just dropped in, on my wee, to ask ye for that twenty-five thousand that's due to Lucis, my daughter ; and I'll take it hot with—I mane short, if ye please. Or, if ye haven't it all in your pocket, a thrifle on account 'll do for to-dee.'

'I'm sorry for Miss O'Birn,' said I. 'But—she's had her thousand pounds—'

'—her thousand pounds ! I wouldn't give sixpence for a beggarly thousand pounds. 'Tis an insult to spake to a gentleman of such a sum.'

'Her thousand pounds, and—I'm afraid—this gentleman, Mr. Withers, will explain—there is no longer any doubt of Miss Molloy's intentions. Lieutenant Steldl is residuary legatee.'

'An' who's Mr. Withers ? Is

it in a conspiracy ye'll be, with your heads as thick together as pays in one shell? Why, 'tis plainer than blazes that *gpx* stands for Lucis O'Birn. What do ye see to that, sir, eh?

'I'm afraid it doesn't,' said I.

'You're a pretty fellow for a lawyer! But I suppose ye'll have to believe what's proved. Higgins, ye're wanted!' shouted he.

He too, it seemed, had brought a friend with him—a little, pinched, shabby, elderly man, with red squinting eyes.

'I'll introujce ye to me friend Higgins—a gentleman and a scholar, that'll rade ye off Hebrew into Chinese for a glass of punch, an' back into Hebrew for two. Faith, I'd like ye to find a question that Higgins wouldn't answer ye off-hand. Says I to him, "Higgins, what does *gpx* spell?" An' says he, "Just Lucis O'Birn."

A smile of amused contempt came into the face of smart Mr. Withers.

'An expert?' asked he.

'An' pray who may *you* be, sir?' asked Major O'Birn. 'D'ye mane to tell me ye haven't heard of Higgins—that ought to be a docthor of divinity and a member of Parlimint, and could see ye undher the teeble whenever ye please?' Having thus annihilated Mr. Withers, 'Higgins, do your duty,' said he.

'There's nothing in it—nothing in it at all,' said Mr. Higgins, in a queer squeak, and in a shuffling sort of tone. 'What's the difficulty in reading that cipher I am at a loss to conceive. Do you mean to tell me that there is anybody on earth, except Major O'Birn, who has found the slightest difficulty in reading what couldn't puzzle, for more than half a second, anybody but a born fool?'

'You are pleased to be compli-

mentary, Mr. Higgins,' said I. 'Mr. Withers, as an expert, assures us that a cipher can only be read in one way.'

'It didn't want an expert to tell you that,' said Mr. Higgins testily. 'Of course you can only read a cipher in one way. How can one set of symbols stand for two different sets of words?'

'Then you will agree with Mr. Withers?'

'No doubt. If Mr. Withers has read the cipher he will agree with me. A cipher is made to a particular key, and it can't be fitted with two. When old women make ciphers, they mostly change the letters by counting forwards or backwards. So first I counted one forwards, and made *g* mean *h*; that came to nothing. Then two forwards, and made *g* mean *i*; nothing again. *J*—no. *K*—no. Then I tried the fifth letter forwards—*l*. According to that rule, *g* would be *l*: *p* would be *u*: *x* (making *a* follow *z*) would be *c*. Next comes *d*, which would be *i*: then *n*, which would be *s*—the true letter being always the fifth letter from the cipher forwards. Follow it out, gentlemen, and see for yourselves.'

I did as he bade me. And the cipher read, letter by letter, as follows, with the peculiar spelling of the name of the testatrix and all:

GPXDN WMDYBDVO JWDMI HT
LUCIS BRIDGITA OBIEN MY

IDXXZ.
NIECE.

There was no more doubt that the cipher was this than it was *My dear nephew, Firentz Steldl*. It meant both equally, and both at the same time!

I put it to every cryptologist in the world, is it within the bounds of credibility that a cipher of twenty-five letters should be read-

able in two exactly opposite and inconsistent ways, and that its two irreconcilable solutions should be gained by following two simple principles, both equally obvious and equally sound? Incredible—nay, impossible! will be the unanimous answer. And yet the impossible, by a marvellous chain of coincidences, was effected in that will of Miss Molloy. She could not intentionally have brought about such a result, even if she had tried. The *i* for the *e* in Ferentz, or rather Firentz, left no room for doubt that Withers's solution was true. On the other hand, the peculiar spelling of Bridgita was an unanswerable argument in favour of Mr. Higgins. Withers had started on the principle which has amused so many readers of Edgar Poe, and is in itself a perfectly true and sound one. Higgins had started on the principle favoured by simpletons who correspond in cipher in the agony columns, and imagine that their silly secrets are not open to anybody who takes five minutes' trouble to read them.

What was to be done—now?

Clearly the situation was not realised by either of the fathers of the rival legatees. But a gloom came over the face of Mr. Withers. He took up the paper on which Mr. Higgins had written his solution, and examined it intently.

'No sane woman would have used such a simple cipher as that,' said he. 'It is just the solution that would satisfy an amateur.'

'True,' said Mr. Higgins, with a slight sneer. 'Jurymen are in the position of amateurs, I believe, and judges too.'

'A cipher can't have two solutions,' said Mr. Withers, throwing the paper down.

'True again,' said Mr. Higgins. 'Happily for Miss O'Birn.'

'Have you studied cryptology

as a science, Mr. Higgins?' asked Mr. Withers, with a wild effort at elaborate courtesy.

'I'm not such an ass,' said Mr. Higgins, with no pretence of courtesy at all. 'I'd as soon set up a science of handwriting as a science of whims.'

'You are insulting, sir! There is a science of handwriting—ay, and of character in handwriting; and I shouldn't like to write like you, judging from what it's like to be.'

'I always make it a point of insulting quacks and humbugs,' said Mr. Higgins. 'It's the first duty of man. I've read that cipher in the way that would satisfy anybody but an expert, and there's an end.'

'Whom do you call quack, sir? Let me tell you that when a man deliberately insults my science, I—I—feel it my duty to knock him down.'

'Gentlemen—gentlemen!' I cried out, 'you have both been very clever—a great deal too clever for me. I would gladly have accepted either of your readings, Heaven knows. But I can't accept both; and both your reasons are so admirable that I can't accept either. And what's worse, it's your arguments, not your assertions, that will have to go into Chancery; and into Chancery we must all go. Yes, there's no help for it now; and, once in, Heaven alone knows when we shall get out again.'

'I object to the law on principle; I shall have nothing to do with law,' said Steld; and I have no doubt but he had excellent reasons for the only principle I ever heard of his having. 'I bring my expert; you are satisfied. I demand twenty-five thousand pounds for my son.'

'I despise the law,' shouted the Major. 'An Irish gentleman

doesn't mix up with pettifogging rascals. I wouldn't touch the dirty thing with the end of an old boot. 'Tis as clear as day—Lucis Bridgita O'Birn.'

'It must be compromise, or—Chancery,' said I. 'Have it as you will.'

'Compromise—with *him*?' said Stedl, pointing to the Major with his thumb. 'Not one penny shall he rob my son.'

'Compromise—with a Stedl?' said the Major, in his turn. 'Maybe with old Nick I would; for old Nick's a gentleman,' added he.

And there was the deadest lock I ever heard of since I was born! No Lord Chancellor ever drew up a will that most clearly meant two opposite and irreconcilable things.

And here, alas, is the end of this story, so far as I am concerned. I say alas in the conventional spirit of a lawyer (as he is supposed to be); for students of knotty points of Equity may search the Chancery reports in vain for any case bearing the name of Molloy, Lake, Stedl, or O'Birn. The effect of a will written in a cipher which can be read in two ways remains undecided to the present hour; and will, unless things repeat themselves in the most incredible way, remain undecided for evermore. The united wisdom of the House of Lords—for it must have got even there at last—was never occupied with investigating the secret thoughts of Miss Molloy.

I really regret, sometimes—quite independently of the advantage that would have accrued to my own banking account—that I did not, in the interests of the profession, apply to the Court instantly on behalf of myself and my co-executor. A certain utterly

ridiculous unwillingness to throw Miss Molloy's property into the very Maelstrom of litigation led me to put off the evil day as long as possible. For I could not help remembering that if, by any chance, the will should at last be set aside altogether for want of anybody's having brains enough to make head or tail of it, or for want of inherent perspicuity, or for any other sufficient reason, the Count and the Major must divide as next of kin, in right of their wives. And that would be worse for the property than a hundred Chanceries of the good old Eldon days. They, in their determination to have all or nothing, were no more eager to push matters to an extremity than I. And so, I verily believe, should we have been standing at this triangular deadlock at the present hour, had not the delay itself brought about a most natural solution in the most natural way in the world. 'When in doubt, do nothing,' I constantly find to be the wisest maxim that ever was made.

My relief, at the time, hardly equalled my surprise. But, considering that Mrs. Stedl and Mrs. O'Birn had never quarrelled—considering that they had met again—considering what sort of young people their son and their daughter were—I must own that I was an ass to feel surprised on learning of the marriage of Lieutenant Stedl to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn. The history of the Montagues and the Capulets does not stand alone in the effect of the feuds of the old upon the hearts of the young. But this is no part of my story. Enough that *her* claims became *his*, while *his* remained his own—and therefore *her* own, too. And if two elderly rascals were kept in somewhat disreputable clover for the

rest of their days, and if two executors were content to run a little safe risk in making things comfortable all round for everybody, themselves included, and if two cryptologists remained irreconcilable foes, and if two young people became happy in their own peculiar way, and if the

Court was deprived of a big cause, and the profession of the bulk of the property of Miss Molloy—well, the fault is mainly my own. I profess only to tell the story, not to solve the mystery, of Miss Molloy's most Remarkable Will.

I COULDN'T.

(See the Illustration.)

ALAS, I'm in such sad disgrace !
I tried to pencil off her face,
But couldn't.

She kindly sat an hour the while,
And archly faced me with a smile,
She shouldn't.

Love took the fallen pencil tip,
And gave a charm to cheek and lip,
He shouldn't.

I caught her roguish smile again,—
To snatch a kiss could I refrain ?
I couldn't !

A. B.

IRISH CHARACTERISTICS.

THERE is some truth in the saying that the easiest way to cure Irish discontent would be to fill up St. George's Channel; and perhaps the proposal now made to connect Tor Point with the Mull of Cantyre may be a step in the right direction. The insular position of Ireland leads the inhabitants to think that they ought to be

'A nation proudly independent,' and to regard the English as foreigners who fold them in subjection. But I am not about to discuss this remedial measure, nor the more drastic one of dipping the country under the sea, though I believe they would be found more effectual and practical than most of the schemes at present under consideration.

Nature has been a cruel step-mother to our sister isle. She has given her a poor soil, unprofitable ores, and weeping skies. As a compensation for all this, and as if in mockery, she has presented her with—a harp. Erin may touch her emblematic chords and waken the wild music of romance. She may gaze on sunsets mellow with fruity tints, and on mountains, lakes, and rivers framed in bows of prismatic light. Her sons and daughters have sympathetic voices and artistic skill. Nor has Melancholy marked them for her own. Indeed, their light-heartedness in adversity is one of their best qualities; and their humour, though often excellent, is occasionally so erratic as to lead some to think, when a claim is made for another university, that a cap and bells would suit most

of them better than a cap and gown.

All classes in Ireland are fond of grandeur and circumstance; and the establishment of a Royal residence there would have a most beneficial effect. During the stay of the Duke of Connaught in the country, he was, as usual, very affable, and won golden opinions among rich and poor. I was told that one day when he was waiting at the door of an hotel, a tatterdemalion came up to him, and, with native assurance, called out,

'Welcome to Ireland, your Royal Highness! I hope I see your Royal Highness well.'

'Quite well. I am much obliged to you,' replied the Duke.

'And your Royal mother the Queen?' continued the man. 'I hope she is also enjoying good health.'

'Yes, thank you,' returned the Duke; 'the Queen is very well.'

'I'm glad to hear it, your Royal Highness. And how are your Royal brothers?'

'Get along there, fellow!' said one of the aide-de-camps, who happened to come up at that moment.

'What are you interfering with me for, sir?' retorted the tatterdemalion, much affronted. 'Don't you see that I'm houlding a conversation with his Royal Highness?'

The Irish, then, are an imaginative people; but unfortunately the mental productions of the country are not exclusively gay and poetic. There is something in the soil and climate that breeds irritability

and pugnacity. This does not come from race; for there is a great mixture of descent in the country, and a large proportion are of English origin. Nor does it arise from legislation; for under all rulers, native or English, Conservative or Liberal, Ireland has been in a disturbed state. No doubt severe laws were passed against Irish Romanists in bygone centuries; but their co-religionists in England, who also suffered, are not now forming conspiracies and defending themselves before courts of justice. We hear much of the penal codes of former times, but little of the offences which led to their enactment. Turn the matter over how you please, you will still find turbulence to be an indigenous plant in the soil. Every country has its own fauna and flora; its own characteristics in the form and feature and mind of its inhabitants. Every country has its own language; and Irishmen do not speak, any more than they think, like Englishmen.

It has become the fashion to say that Ireland has suffered from its manufactures having been destroyed by England in past times. But industries continue to die out there now, because of the want of a quiet docile population. A large flax factory was established a few years ago by some enterprising men in the south of Ireland; but it had soon to be closed. I was told: 'The children do not work here as they do in the north; and, as soon as their labour becomes of the least value, their parents come and threaten to take them away unless their wages are raised.' Moreover, capitalists are not inclined to invest their money where there is neither coal nor iron, and where, if they dismiss any of their hands, they are in danger of having their buildings

burnt or their machinery destroyed.

Given the character, what is the life? Necessarily the Irish are poor. The peasantry spend much of their time in gossiping, smoking, card-playing, and in attending fairs, weddings, wakes, and funerals—the latter are often a mile long. The description one of them gives of himself is not inaccurate:

'I'm not very much given to work,
It was never the way with the Bradys;
But I'd make a most excellent Turk,
For I'm fond of tobacco and ladies.'

I cannot say whether the true Moslem is quite so fond of porter and whisky. But the people are forward enough in attending religious festivals, and there are men ready to encourage them in all sorts of ridiculous superstitions. I know a substantial farmer who is very particular about having his cattle blessed every year by the priest, and another who drives them on Midsummer's-eve between fires—a remnant apparently of fire-worship. On one occasion I ventured to ask a pretty girl with dark wavy hair and lovely violet eyes, but without any shoes or stockings, or indeed much petticoats, why, instead of purchasing what was so necessary, she parted with all her money to the priest. But I soon found that argument and advice were of no avail, her ready answer being,

'Shure, an' what could I do better with it than give it to the Church?'

'Well, Norah,' I replied, 'your thoughts are heavenly; may you be blessed in your deed! You have more faith than I in the absolution of priests and the prayers of saints. I remember an old Frenchwoman once telling me that I did not believe in Heaven because I said I had doubts about the miracle at La Salette.'

'It was thrue for her,' she returned; 'and I should not be surprised if you did not believe there was such a thing as a Providence when you don't believe that there is such a thing as a Virgin.'

If the people are willing, the priests are pressing, and resort to various bold devices to increase their revenues. I heard of one man stationing himself with the plate a little way inside the chapel-door, and announcing to the congregation in a stentorian voice the amount which each contributor deposited; thus, 'Bartholomew Connell, half-a-crown; Jeremiah Murphy, sixpence.' Sometimes there is an argument and controversy with the donor. I heard of an occasion when two burly priests placed themselves in the doorway with their plates, and made such a higgling and obstruction that at last the faithful outside became impatient, manned a rush, knocked over their spiritual teachers, and literally entered the kingdom of heaven by violence.

Early marriages are a prolific source of misery in Ireland, followed as they invariably are by a long tail of children. There is another pauperising custom: when a farmer has saved a little money, instead of employing it in his business or leaving the bulk of it to his eldest son, he divides it equally during his lifetime among his children. The result is that the country is full of young fellows looking out to make their fortunes by marriage, the end of which shows the disastrous folly of such enterprises. The great part of the little portion thus obtained is consumed on the wedding festivities, and a large share, generally about ten per cent, goes to the priest, with whom a bargain must be struck. The clergy, who levy most of their money in this way, consider it a matter both of

duty and profit to encourage these unions, and I remember hearing one of them tell the people in his sermon 'to marry young, and not to put it off till they were old, when they would be cawing at one another like two cats in a crib.' The respect which the Irish have for their priests does not prevent them from enjoying a joke at their expense. I remember hearing an instance of a poor girl going to a priest to ask him to unite her to the boy of her choice. The holy man demanded two sovereigns for the accommodation. The girl pleaded hard that she had not so much money; but he was inexorable: two sovereigns he must have. She was leaving the house in the greatest despondency, when her eye lighted on the priest's cloak hanging on a peg in the hall. A bright thought occurred to her quick Irish mind: she took it down and vanished. Half an hour later she returned with the money, accompanied by her beloved Pat. The priest was now all smiles, performed the service with great goodwill, and bestowed on the happy couple a hearty blessing; and, as they left the church, Kathleen dropped a curtsy, thanked him for his kindness, and presented him with the pawn-ticket that he might recover his cloak.

The priests are very strict about confession in Ireland, and I fancy some of them—for there are merry fellows among them—have occasionally a good laugh when alone together over the secrets divulged to them. Some people who have very tender consciences make full and elaborate confessions, extending them into minute details about all their peccadilloes and even about every little impertinence of thought which has obtruded itself upon them; but I imagine that there is a large class who, while

making a pretty fair show in the confessional, carefully keep to themselves anything which might entail a heavy penance. I knew a short time since an old gentleman who was very particular in this matter. Hearing that a drunken blacksmith had died in a village on his property, he was much perturbed, and inquired anxiously whether at the last he had received the ministrations of a priest. On being assured that he had, he exclaimed with great relief, 'O, well, I am glad to hear that. It's all right with the poor devil.'

The convenient manner in which priests modify the penalties for offences is exemplified in the following story. A poor man came to confession, and what he had to tell was that he had stolen a pig.

'Was it a good pig?' inquired the parish priest.

'Egad, your rivrence, it was an illigant cratur.'

'Did it belong to a rich man or a poor one?'

'O, a very rich man, your rivrence.'

'Well, well, that makes a difference. It is not of much consequence; he could afford to lose it. You need only say a few "Ave Marias" and "Pater noster" for a week.'

'Thanks, your rivrence; I'll do that.'

'By the way, Pat,' said the priest, as he was going out, 'whom did the pig belong to?'

'Belong to, did you say? Shure, didn't it belong to your rivrence?'

Much has been said about the 'earth hunger' of the Irish, but the truth is that they want farms because they have a money value. Lately, when prices fell, their desire for land wonderfully diminished; in short, it was difficult to obtain any offers for it. In general, when a farm is to let, there

are plenty of men coming forward with capital to take it—a fact which proves that in a large number of cases the rents are not so high as to prevent accumulation. A stranger would be much deceived by the appearance of many of the tenants. I have now before my mind a man who looked like a dirty ragged beggar. The earthen floor of his cabin was in a state of mud, owing to the door being left open to admit daylight, and the chifionier was filled with a family of fowls who made the parlour their passage-room to the farmyard. Outside, in front, the ground was a deep mass of wet straw and manure, across which the barefooted ladies of the establishment were constantly passing to and fro into the house, making the muddy floor more grimy and odoriferous. But yet this man, whom you would not have supposed to be worth five pounds, gave each of his daughters a marriage portion of five hundred.

It is difficult to talk much and well, and the Irish seldom think twice before they speak. To judge from their utterances you might think the atmosphere was full of murder. Not only farmers, but even some professional men, think nothing of saying that this or that landlord should be shot. We feel inclined to call out, as the frogs in the fable did to the boys who were stoning them, 'Remember what is play to you is death to us.' I suppose that there is scarcely one proprietor in Ireland who has not been denounced by some person and received threatening letters. But it is mostly 'words, words,' and comes from that wind on the brain from which the Irish proverbially suffer. In some cases the menaces are carried out; and no doubt at present, if unpopular landlords were not armed and guarded, and if tenants could hold

their guns straight, we should have greater destruction. But nevertheless the majority of the so-called 'tyrants' move about without being in much fear or danger. Never was there a nation between whose words and actions there was so wide a discrepancy. A gentleman, now a celebrated Land League orator, once said to me, 'Nobody tells the truth in Ireland; I never do,' and I quote his observation not only to show the amount of false representation in the country, but also of thoughtless assertion. Many an Irish tenant flatters his landlord to his face and abuses him behind his back, but means neither one nor the other, but simply wishes he could avoid paying his rent. He considers that to evict him would be a crime, but experience shows that he would not be sorry that his neighbour was dispossessed if he could get the farm a bargain; sometimes in his hurry he even bids more than the value, and causes loss to himself and his landlord.

I have formed these opinions from a long acquaintance with Ireland, and from what I have heard from others, and merely add the following as an illustration of the character of some of the peasantry:

Since the Land League have commenced their operations I have received several letters full of threats and insults. No member of our family ever had one previously. We occasionally give small presents of money to the poorer tenants, and sent one lately to a man who farms about twenty acres of land. He was profuse in his thanks, spoke of the kindness of his 'noble landlord,' was especially grateful for some seed potatoes, and for some money advanced to him to sow his land. As I had in writing gently observed that he had not paid his rent, he went on to say that a few days previously

his wife had gone to our agent about some rates; and the same night, horrible to relate, a knocking was heard at his window, and on looking out they saw fifteen men with blackened faces, who asked them if they had paid their rent, and why his wife went to see the agent. On receiving an explanation of the supposed offence the gang of ruffians departed. Under these trying circumstances he said he was afraid to pay his rent, but would cheerfully do so 'when the present agitation is over,' which no doubt he hopes will be some time off. He concluded by wishing us 'a merry Christmas and a happy new year.' But the most remarkable thing of the whole was, that the handwriting was indubitably the same as that of the threatening letters!

I know this man well, and believe that he was born on the property. He is typical of a class, and I will venture to say that there never was an Englishman at all like him. At first sight you would take him for a mixture of dirt and ignorance; next, you would regard him as a simple-minded honest man; finally, you would conclude that he was a tangled web of intelligence, folly, and cajolery. He is not uneducated; his letters are long, well written, and full of ingenious fictions. In the one above mentioned there was scarcely a word of truth, except perhaps the subscription, 'From your unworthy tenant.' In appearance he belongs to the older generation of the Irish, having hard quaint features and a knowing twinkle of eye. With his battered hat slouched on one side, he would make a capital sketch for a comic paper, and there is something genial and good-humoured about his expression which makes you half forget that he is a rascal.

Nothing can be more unfortunate than the dependence of the Irish upon the 'lazy food' of a root which has become subject to disease. But the habit is as difficult to cure as the plant; for of what avail is it to offer a man a plate of porridge who has been accustomed to eat a stone of potatoes in the day, and who can swallow loaves like a clown in a pantomime? How will you fill up the void which he hates? And when we take into account the Irish character and the depressing influence of three unfavourable seasons, what a tempting field lay open for the work of ambitious and self-seeking agitators! The fervid imagination of the people pictures to itself all sorts of pleasant possibilities, and their sympathetic nature readily seconds the persuasions of high-flown oratory. There is no country so easily fanned into a flame, or whose prosperity depends so much upon the summary repression of lawlessness. The words of Carleton the novelist, himself the son of a small farmer, and naturally inclined to side with the peasantry, are worth recalling at the present day. He wrote during the 'tithe war' in the earlier half of this century: 'Never,' he says, 'has there been an instance of the virtues of a whole people being so debauched and contaminated by the teachings of unscrupulous agitators.' He adds that he has always been an anti-repealer, and that although some of the Young Irelanders are his personal friends, 'no one knows better than they that I have always endeavoured to dissuade them from the madness of their course.'

It will have been observed that I consider the failings of the Irish

to be more their misfortune than their fault, and no people require greater protection against themselves. Were the plant transferred to a better soil, it would bear better fruit. When the English settle in Ireland they fall into the habits of the country; when the Irish emigrate they gradually become prosperous, and a great part of the progress in America is due to their activity. I am far from denying that they have good qualities; they are hospitable and capable of great affection, they are quick of apprehension, and enthusiastic in religious devotion. Equable, prudent, and law-abiding they are not, and what Dickens said of the ladies might be well applied to them: 'Bless those women, they never do anything by halves!'

The damp relaxing climate of the south and west of Ireland—for it is of those parts I am speaking—predisposes to slovenliness and improvidence. In atmospheric conditions Devonshire is somewhat similar, and the habits of the people are not very different. In both countries we find a want of cleanliness, thatched houses, and occasionally mud walls. Cider was formerly much drunk in the south of Ireland. Wages are low in Devonshire, but there is not the same restlessness among the population. I once asked a somewhat intelligent and very loquacious Irishman whether his countrymen were not thriftless.

'Very, sir,' he replied; 'it's because they're a nawble-minded people, sir. They're above thinking of thrifes. Shure, isn't it a grand thing for a man when he's 'atin' his breakfast not to know where he'll go for his dinner?'

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

WHEN Mrs. McCullagh died, the evil wrought by her weakness and folly did not die with her. Weeds as well as flowers can grow above a grave; other actions besides those of the just can spring up from the dust, and blossom and bear fruit a hundredfold.

Young though her first-born child was at the time of her death, he was quite old enough to understand his father and mother had never been of one mind; and that, while he was 'mamma's pet,' his brothers were regarded by his male parent with more favour than himself. The reason for this was not far to seek.

In the child Robert Mr. McCullagh beheld reproduced the beauty, the giddiness, the silliness, the perversity of the girl he had married all too rashly; and to this might be added the annoyance and mortification of seeing his own boy brought up to deride him, encouraged in petty deceit and constant dissimulation. From the time little Robert, or 'wee Rabbie,' as his father at that period affectionately termed him, was sufficiently advanced in life to sit on a footstool and 'behave himself prettily,' he had been accustomed to hear his mother and her gossips talking over all the trials of her wedded life, mourning that Mr. McCullagh was not like anybody else, and could not be remade into a similitude of any other person. There are always women to listen when

a woman speaks ill of her husband; there is no lack, in this world, of ladies only too ready to sympathise (?)—Heaven save the mark!—with those of their sex who have a fancy to expose a real or imaginary grievance to the public eye.

Over cups of tea and slices of thin bread-and-butter Mr. McCullagh's shortcomings were discussed, every fresh instance of what Mrs. McCullagh called his 'niggardliness' evoking a perfect chorus of pitying exclamations from her friends. All the evil the man did, or that his wife thought he did, which came to much the same thing, was enlarged upon and exhibited from every possible point of view. Whatever good actions he might have performed—and of a truth there was as much good as bad about Mr. McCullagh—were quietly left to languish in the shade. Amongst Mrs. McCullagh's friends chanced to be those whose English was none of the purest; but without a thought of their own sins in the way of pronunciation and grammar, they were unanimous in the opinion that Mr. McCullagh's Scotticisms were perfectly dreadful, and never wearied of asking his wife why she did not teach him better.

Mrs. McCullagh had neither the loyalty nor the good sense to say she loved her husband's 'braid Scotch' better than any Cockney accent. The time when she thought him perfection—listened for his footfall on the stairs, and felt the colour mantling her

cheeks at sound of his voice at the door—might never have been for any impression it had left behind: rather she delighted in exposing his infirmities and expatiating on his imperfections. Anything more ludicrous to an outsider than the imitations of Mr. McCullagh's mode of speech, in which the various ladies indulged, could scarcely be conceived. Those alone who have been privileged to hear an Irish-woman with a very broad accent mimicking the 'English tongue' can form some faint idea of what Mr. McCullagh's sharp incisive sentences and peculiar forms of expression became when reproduced by ladies in the habit of dropping their *h*'s, as the young person in the fairy tale dropped pearls, whenever they opened their mouths to speak, and of inserting them where *h* had no manner of right to be.

Had the school been a good one it is more than likely little Robert would not have learnt the lessons set before him with such rapidity as was the case; but being what it was, the child soon knew by heart every peculiarity of his father's speech and manner, and felt very sure his mother was the only person in the establishment to love and obey.

After a fashion, indeed, the boy had to obey the head of the household; but he only rendered the obedience of fear and of dislike. Whenever he could safely run counter to his father's wishes he did so; and in this course of conduct he was encouraged by his mother, whose whole existence seemed spent in considering how she could elude her husband's vigilance, and procure for herself, and give Robert share of, those little luxuries her soul loved, indulgence in which Mr. McCullagh

met either with active hostility or viewed with grim disapproval.

As regarded the training of children, Mr. McCullagh's ideas were Spartan. His own breakfast was always prefaced by a great basin of porridge, which he pronounced 'parritch' and spoke of as 'them'; and he conscientiously believed no one could grow up to be strong, wise, or happy who had not morning after morning partaken of a sufficient portion of Scotch oatmeal thus prepared. He had 'eaten them,' he said, 'for mony a year, and was glad to get them, and he did not know what his wife meant by turning up her nose at good victuals and setting her boy's stomach against them too. What serves me might serve him, I think,' added Mr. McCullagh; and there was a certain amount of reason in this remark, though Mrs. McCullagh utterly failed to see it.

After his mother's death the position of the boy Robert was, as may readily be conceived, none of the pleasantest. During her illness he had lived much in her room, sharing the dainties she could barely touch, listening to her murmuring complaints, doing very much what he pleased, and patted and extolled by visitors for his filial affection. The lad felt her loss most bitterly. Independent of the anguish all children experience when they are brought in contact with the angel who seems to them so terrible in its silence, so merciless in its strength, there was for this precocious child with the dark eyes and the curly hair a certain knowledge that when the coffin was carried downstairs the only friend he possessed in that house was leaving it forever. The child—for he was nothing more—sat down in a corner as if his heart would break; and as the days went on and his tears refused

to flow any longer, he began to mope about the rooms, haunting his late mother's bedchamber, and being enough, so declared Miss Nicol, 'to make a person go melancholy mad.'

'Let him be, Janet, let him be,' said Mr. McCullagh, when appealed to on the subject of Robert's 'vagaries;' 'the mother made, perhaps, ower much of him, and it's natural he should fret after her;' and in his own way Mr. McCullagh tried to conciliate and comfort the boy. He gave him weak tea or milk-and-water for his breakfast. He brought him up tiny parcels of confectionery, he got him a bag of marbles and a spinning-top, but it was all in vain; the child took what his father had to give with listless indifference, and soon recommenced his aimless rambles through the house.

'What you want is a sound whipping, Robbie,' said Miss Nicol one day, when, meeting him coming slowly up the stairs, she asked him 'what he wanted,' and the boy answered he did 'not know;' 'and if I were your father I would give it to you.'

Robert did not say a word in reply; he only laid his face on the broad balustrade, and as she reached the landing she heard a strangled yet irrepressible sob.

'Carle take the lad,' she muttered; 'why can't he go and play himself like his brothers?' and again she spoke to Mr. McCullagh, stating her belief that unless 'something was done Robert would break his heart.'

'If you could tell me what is to be done, there might be some use in your talking,' answered Mr. McCullagh, in the tone which had so often exasperated his wife; 'but if you can't, you had best hold your tongue.'

Miss Nicol followed this excel-

lent advice, not because she felt in the slightest degree offended at Mr. McCullagh's words or manner, which were only, as she often said, 'his way,' but because she really had no suggestion to offer, having merely thrown out a hint as to the child's condition in the hope it would 'simmer' in his father's mind.

Mr. McCullagh was, however, neither blind nor indifferent. Hard he might be, but just at that period he came nearer loving his first-born than had ever been the case since the boy was two years old. Deep down in the depths of the flintiest nature there is implanted a yearning for affection, a desire to be mourned after and remembered when earth's cares and vanities are for us no more; and Mr. McCullagh, seeing the child's grief for his mother, longed perchance for even a modicum of that attachment to be transferred to him.

But it was not to be for ever. At the precise period when Mr. McCullagh felt most perplexed as to what he should do with regard to Robert, Mr. Mostin chanced to call.

By one of those inexplicable turns of fortune which are always coming to men who fail to make a proper use of them, Mrs. McCullagh's father had some time after his bankruptcy (his estate paid about twopence in the pound) fallen upon his feet. A City gentleman who had known something of Mr. Mostin in his best days, wishing to be his own architect, asked the former builder to carry out his plan, and see the work was well and substantially executed.

In its integrity Mr. Mostin understood his trade to a nicety; he saw that the best materials only were used, that the bricks were properly bedded, that the timber was well seasoned, the drains perfectly laid. Not being tied down

as regarded expense, he suggested and carried out many small improvements on the original plan, which, principally relating to kitchen and laundry arrangements (people washed at home in those days), got talked about and gained him credit.

The one house led to more; by degrees he got together an admirable connection, and at the time of his daughter's death was doing better than had been the case in his palmiest days.

Coming up from the country, where he happened to be superintending the building of an additional wing to a lordly mansion, he happened to call on one of little Robert's worst days at the house off Basinghall-street.

'The little lad's no so well as he might be,' said Mr. McCullagh, in apologetic explanation.

'He will never get better if he goes on as he is doing,' added Miss Nicol, with cruel and unnecessary candour.

His grandfather looked at the child thoughtfully. He was standing beside the window, listlessly gazing out on the dreary court; his cheeks were white, and great black rings circled his eyes. He was growing tall and weedy, 'just like a potato-haulm in a cellar,' thought the builder; his clothes were different from those his mother had got for him; they were strong and good and warm enough, but they were not 'nice.'

'Here, Bob, my boy,' said Mr. Mostin cheerfully, when his scrutiny was quite completed, 'I want you.'

'And don't walk as if you had fourteen-pound weights to your shoes,' observed Miss Nicol.

'Let him be, let him be, Janet,' expostulated Mr. McCullagh, using his customary formula: 'the child is ailing; anybody with half an eye could see that.'

'It seems to me,' observed his grandfather, putting his hand under the boy's chin, and turning up a very thin, mournful, pallid face for public inspection,—'it seems to me, young gentleman, that a run in the country is about what you stand most in need of. How should you like to come with me down into Devonshire for a fortnight? I am lodging at a nice farmhouse there, where there are cows and ducks and Guinea fowl and pigs and horses, and an old pony I daresay they would let you ride round the paddock. Do you think that would put some life in your body and some colour in your cheeks—eh?' and Mr. Mostin, who, while thus speaking ostensibly to the child, had been really addressing the father, glanced as he concluded round at Mr. McCullagh to see how he took the proposition.

'Would you like to go with your grandfather, Robbie?' asked Mr. McCullagh; 'don't say no if ye want to say yes.'

For answer the boy put a thin hand in that of his grandfather, while his eyes lighted up, and a faint smile flickered about his mouth.

'You would be pleased to see all those things?' said Mr. Mostin; 'well, then, you shall. Go and say "Thank you, father, for giving me leave to take such a fine holiday;"' and he pushed his grandson gently towards Mr. McCullagh.

'Thank you, father, for giving me leave to take such a fine holiday,' said the child obediently, but retreating even as he spoke to Mr. Mostin's side.

'He's like his mother,' thought Mr. McCullagh, with a bitter pang. 'He can't abide me. He'd take sooner to any stranger.'

'I don't think he has got any clothes fit to go from home in,' said Miss Nicol, practical and disagreeable as usual.

'O, we needn't trouble ourselves about clothes,' answered Mr. Mostin gaily; 'we don't want velvet and fine broadcloth to run about a farmyard, and race with the dogs, and shake down apples in the orchard, and roll on the grass. Eh, my boy?'

It was thus it chanced that Robert the younger left his father's house, never to return to it as a permanent inmate. When the fortnight was over, Mr. Mostin asked permission to keep the child a little longer; then he formally proposed to take him altogether, pay for his education, and start him in the world.

Mr. McCullagh made no objection. He knew well enough, if no one else did, there was that in Robert's nature which would divide them for ever, though one roof covered them, though they ate at one table and sat in one room.

'Ye can't do it,' he said, in answer to his relation's remark, that she did not think it was well to part brothers, or let a boy be brought up independent of his father. 'If two are so constituted it is just an impossibility they can run together, it's best they should run separate, and neither anger nor impede each other. And ye know you couldn't get on with Robert, to say nothing of other matters. Ye would be for aye girding at the boy, and he would be for ever mocking you. It is in his blood and bone, and he can't help it. He'll be better with his grandfather; "like likes like," ye remember, and they'll suit one another to a turn.'

All of which was so far true that Mr. Mostin and Robert agreed admirably; and that, at those convivial meetings when the ex-builder, no matter where he chanced temporarily to put up, gathered various choice and hilarious spirits

around him, the boy was encouraged to give, not without success, such specimens of Miss Janet Nicol's accent and phraseology as delighted the table. Sometimes, emboldened by applause, Robert also ventured a sly imitation of his father's peculiarities, which were totally different from those of his kinswoman.

On such occasions, Mr. Mostin, having generally partaken of more punch than was good for him, would rebuke the lad for 'daring to make game of his parent;' but, at the same time, Robert, seeing him winking at his boon companions, understood clearly his grandfather enjoyed the 'representation,' and only mentioned he was doing wrong as a concession to the proprieties.

In particular there were three Scotch songs the boy chanted with such inimitable gravity and precision, a whole company would be convulsed by the performance. Who knows? Perhaps while the droning melody continued, accompanied only by shrieks of laughter, Mr. Mostin felt at last ample measure was being dealt out to those who had not, he thought, dealt quite fairly with his daughter; and it is very certain the little lad went to rest after one of these exhibitions satisfied and happy, and feeling his mamma would have been pleased had she heard his accurate reproduction in the vernacular of 'Sir Patrick' and 'Auld lang syne.'

There came a day, however, when Mr. Mostin, who happened about that period to be somewhat ailing and short of money, decided a stop must be put to Robert's performances.

'You had best leave off all that sort of thing when we get back to London,' he said to the boy as they walked to the coach which was to convey them to town;

'you hardly know now when you are doing it, and you may get me and yourself too into trouble if anything of the kind should come round to your father's ears. When I can manage it I'll send you to school for a while, where I hope the master will find you something better to do than making game of your elders.'

'Nae doot,' answered Robert, running off to the other side of the road as he spoke, and laughing till the very birds ceased their songs to listen to him.

He was nearly a year older then than when he first quitted Basinghall-street, strong, healthy, happy.

'Such a pretty boy,' everybody said.

'And a good boy, too,' his grandfather quickly added.

In due time Robert went to a boarding-school; and Mr. Mostin, in the course of his business meeting with a certain nobleman possessed of very pronounced, if somewhat crude, ideas on the subjects of architecture and decoration, readily induced him to start a weekly journal, in which were explained and discussed at great length and expense the various crotchets agitating the lordly mind. It was about this period that, according to Mr. McCullagh, the builder 'lost his head.'

'It never was good for much,' opined his son-in-law; 'but it's clean gone now. Why, I met him to-day driving a cabriolet down Cheapside. He was smoking a cigar as big as a carrot; and he had a slip of a boy in top-boots, not a bit bigger than wee Allen, perilling his life, holding on like grim death behind.'

That was the golden summertime of Mr. Mostin's existence. He did not do anything in it worthy the name of work; his name appeared on the outside

page of the journal as a 'Consulting Builder,' in which character he was good enough to find fault with almost everything everybody else did, and to throw out suggestions, none, save those possessed of long purses and little brains, would ever have dreamt of adopting. Mr. McCullagh was quite right. His father-in-law had lost his head, and he never found that useful appendage again, till one day when news arrived at the publishing office of his patron's death.

Then, as if by magic, all the clocks of the establishment ran down and were never wound up again; the editors, contributors, clerks, and errand-boys disappeared as thoroughly as though they had been touched by an enchanter's wand. The journal was offered for sale, and not a bid could be got for it; the shutters were put up, and bills posted all over them announcing the place was to let; in about forty-eight hours the premises had acquired a premature look of neglect and age; and at the end of the same period Mr. Mostin was offering his cab and high-stepping horse with plated harness, at a ruinous sacrifice, and the child in top-boots had gone crying home to his mother, knowing he would never again get such an easy place or indulgent master.

Before all these events happened, Mr. Mostin had done two good things—he married an extremely practical and sensible woman, possessed of a small competence which neither he nor any creditor could touch; further, he had got Robert a very good situation in a merchant's office.

'If you will go back to your own proper business, and stick to it,' said the sensible second wife, addressing her husband, 'and you,' turning to Robert, 'go

on as well as you have been doing, we shall be able to make shift somehow. Of course I always knew we could not continue to live as we have been doing.'

'Mistress Mostin is letting lodgings, and he has taken a situation to look after dilapidations for a gentleman who owns a lot of property in Bermondsey,' explained Mr. McCullagh to Miss Nicol.

'That's a bit of a come down, I'm thinking,' said that lady dryly.

'They seem getting along pretty fair,' answered Mr. McCullagh.

'Is Robert coming home?'

'No; I asked him, but he seemed as if he would prefer casting in his lot with them.'

'How is he getting on?'

'First-rate—better nor ever I expected he would get on at anything.'

And so Robert continued to get on; spite of his father's doubts, no complaints of his son ever reached him. He seemed to give satisfaction to his employers, for, as time went by, they advanced him from post to post, at each change raising his salary.

'Pousnetts seem to set great store by Robert,' Mr. McCullagh was wont on such occasions to remark; to which Miss Nicol would reply, 'Ay, so it seems,' in a tone which committed her to nothing.

The other sons were her favourites. Robert, with his handsome face and easy pleasant manners and southern tongue, might be somebody's fancy—'no doubt,' she thought, 'he is; but for her part give her the other lads—quiet and canny, and with no nonsense about them. There might be something in Robert that suited the English folks; but for her she felt misgivings.'

Still, the years went by, and the young man's conduct justified

none of her forebodings. He and his father came no nearer to each other; but she felt though Mr. McCullagh did not like, he was proud of, his first-born.

When talking about his sons to strangers, he was apt to say they had done wonderfully well, finishing with the remark, 'Pousnetts thought a deal of his eldest. He's manager there, and they trust most things to him.'

Every man has his weakness. Mr. McCullagh in his heart did not care for or believe in his first-born, yet he liked thus to boast about him occasionally.

When he saw him rushing out of bank-parlours, or stopped in the streets and button-holed by the heads of large houses, he was wont to cast disparaging glances upon his son's superfine broadcloth, spotless linen, and carefully brushed hat, and murmur, 'Fine feathers make fine birds. It's to be hoped you'll never have yours plucked off your back;' but then he would return home and tell Miss Nicol how he had seen Robert 'at home amongst the best.'

'He had always high notions,' Miss Nicol invariably answered.

And perhaps it was for this reason, whenever the young man entered his father's door, he seemed to bring the same repellant element with him across the threshold which he met upon it.

CHAPTER V.

MR. POUSNETT REQUESTS THE PLEASURE.

NOT even in the former days, when, after being turned out of the room for some childish misdeed, he stood on the landing and shook his little fist in im-

tant rage at the door just closed against him, had the younger Robert felt he hated his father with such a perfect hatred as when he left the house near Basinghall-street, to which he had gone so jubilantly on 'a fool's errand.'

It was not merely that his request had been refused; but, in addition, every possible element of annoyance accompanied the rejection.

If Mr. McCullagh had considered for days and weeks how to humiliate and mortify his son, he could not have devised a more perfect plan than that he got up on the spur of the moment. In the course of an interview which lasted little more than ten minutes he managed to extol his own system of doing business, to depreciate that of other men, to cast a doubt on Pousnetts' solvency, to insinuate his son was no better than a simpleton, to cut the ground of supposed usefulness from under Robert's feet, and to suggest an awful idea which had not before occurred to the young man—namely, that if he failed to find seven thousand pounds in cash, or cash's equivalent, good bills, he would very likely—most likely, indeed—lose his berth, and find himself as completely out in the cold as had been the case in his childhood, when Mr. McCullagh was in the habit of saying,

'If ye can't behave yourself, Robbie, ye had best leave the room. I can't have dour contrary boys sulking where I am.'

It all came back to him as he strode hurriedly up the court. Fast as he walked, the old, old times seemed to follow faster after him. His pretty indulgent mother, whose beauty was set amid such sordid surroundings; the meagre fires; the meagre meals the wearisome supper-

parties, which derived their only scintillation of amusement from 'toddy,' the quavering Scotch ballads; the decisive, yet drawling, Scotch accent; the cold of the house; its scanty furniture; the advent of Miss Nicol; his mother's death; the small lamentation which was made about that event; the intensely Scotch gathering which partook of the funeral baked meats and 'drappies' of whisky; the instant changes which occurred in the household; the sudden disappearance of all the dead woman's little decorations; the swoop which was made upon her small vanities; the awful weeks which ensued after she was carried down-stairs in her coffin; the quarrels he and his father waged during his boyish visits home; the sneers at his grandfather's uppishness; the mock condolences when Mr. Mostin fell; the sarcasms, not always covert, at his own pretensions—as all these things rushed through his mind, the younger Robert hurried on as though, to quote one of his father's favourite phrases, 'the de'il were after him,' which, perhaps, indeed he was.

As a rule, a man need have no worse devil at his heels than a weak ill-regulated mind.

There was nothing less likely than that, in his present state of irritation, Robert junior would immediately bend his steps in the direction of his employers' office. Horribly mortified, and with a feeling of the keenest disappointment distracting his heart, the young man traversed that nest of courts and alleys which still intervenes between Basinghall-street and Gutter-lane.

Those alone who, in their extremity, when some grievous hour of need was just upon the point of striking, have turned out of the busy, bustling, noisy thorough-

fares of London, thronged full of people, can understand the soothing effects produced upon young McCullagh's mind by Three Nuns-passage, or the narrow pavement around the church of St. Michael Bassishaw.

By the time he reached Gutter-lane and was making his way back to Cheapside by Mitre-court, he felt able to face the position. Quiet London had laid her soothing hand upon him (and in the whole of Nature there is no such soother as London can be on occasion—at once an opiate and a tonic), and, though the trouble still remained, he felt he could go back and talk to Mr. Pousnett about it; tell him he must give up all idea of the partnership; that he had played the sole card he possessed, and lost his game.

Pousnetts' firm carried on business in a court leading out of Leadenhall-street; they had the whole of the court to themselves, and even then their premises were not half large enough for the business they did. They owned Nos. 1 to 5 inclusive; and every inch of the premises was tenanted by clerks, packers, foremen, correspondents, and suchlike. A princely house Pousnetts' had once been styled; and Mr. Pousnett, the present head of the firm, was reckoned in the City a most courtly gentleman. His appearance was one which commanded attention; his manners were in advance of that of any Lord Mayor, past, present, or to come. He did not patronise City tailors; and his dress was of a cut and style Lombard-street, with tardy halting steps, lagged after in vain.

Pousnetts did business with all parts of the habitable globe. It was an old house, which had been in existence before George II. came to the throne, or Culloden was

fought. No more respectable firm existed in the City of London. The world clearly understood when it put itself in Pousnetts' hands it would be well treated, and that it might relax a little of its customary suspicion in dealing with people who stood so far above all suspicion. Vain, and in many respects simple, as Robert McCullagh happened to be, his own rapid advance in Pousnetts' house had surprised himself almost as much as it had done his father. He could ascribe it to no other cause than the liking Mr. Pousnett had conceived for him. Love begets love, we are told, and it was possible the young man's admiration of his chief, his slavish imitation of his dress and manner, his fixed belief that on the face of the earth no such house as Pousnetts' could be found, might have touched even the worldly heart of Herrion Pousnett. Ice was not colder or stone harder than that heart in reality; but it wore on the surface a pleasant air of sunny geniality. Mr. Pousnett had never been seen in an undignified rage; he never vituperated his clerks; he never signed angry letters; he never stormed and swore 'promiscuous,' like old Betterton in Tower-street, when business matters went wrong, or uninsured ships went to the bottom, or people failed and let the house in for what would have seemed great fortunes to smaller firms. Summer and winter, this good Christian's temper was always the same; his manners were uniformly suave; his course of proceeding dignifiedly respectable.

When debtors did not pay he never troubled them or himself with unnecessary correspondence: he simply handed the matter to his solicitor, and said it had passed out of his control. The most severe thing he ever said about a

persistent bore, with right on his side, was,

'Do not let that person see me again.'

Though not foremost, Mr. Pousnett was ever prominent in good works. He did not attend meetings or sit on committees; but he gave his cheque for most charitable purposes, which, in the opinion of various secretaries, answered all purposes quite as well, if not better. He had a house at the West-end, and a pretty place on the Thames. In private life he did not affect business acquaintances. It was known at the office his daughters had their maids, and his sons their hunters. It was understood Mr. Pousnett's Christian name was derived from his mother's side of the house; and that, in some remote way, he was through her allied to nobility—a stately gentleman as ever paced Leadenhall-street morning after morning, and affably returned the respectful greetings of his clerks, and opened the letters laid upon his table without haste or anxiety, or the slightest dread as to what the envelopes might contain.

In striking contrast all this to the proceedings in that other court off Basinghall-street, to the primitive manners, the broad Scotch speech, the keen cynical tongue of 'auld Rab' and his awkward squad of Northern followers, not one of whom had been trained, or could have been trained, in that school of politeness it was the glory of Pousnetts' young men to belong to, and their study and ambition to maintain intact.

And it was in such a house as this young Robert might, but for his father's absurd prejudices, have been partner; there he had the opportunity of hanging up his hat for life, and yet could not avail himself of the offer. Well,

it was not his fault; if he had been constituted differently, perhaps his father would have helped him; but, save in a spiritual sense, a man cannot be born again, and if he could, Robert McCullagh felt very sure no number of fresh births were likely to make him resemble the Scotch merchant's idea of human perfection.

No, it was all over, and he would tell Mr. Pousnett so at once. No object could be gained by delaying his communication. A week or a year would effect, he knew, no change in his father's determination, and it was best Mr. Pousnett should understand what that determination turned out to be, at once.

It was with a very dejected mien that, after knocking at the door of the great man's room, Robert entered the apartment he had hoped, but a few hours previously, soon to be free of. Mr. Pousnett had already got on his top-coat, and was looking into his hat, as is the custom of men, before covering his head. He did not glance round as the manager entered; he merely said,

'Well, what is it?'

'I only wanted to speak to you, sir,' answered young McCullagh; 'but I see you are going, and I will not detain you. Tomorrow—the next day—any time will do.'

'I am in no hurry,' answered Mr. Pousnett pleasantly. 'I was only going because there seemed nothing more to do here; what did you want to say to me?'

Certainly a polished gentleman in appearance, manner, and speech; so polished, and so dissimilar from Mr. McCullagh, it was difficult for a moment to realise they belonged to the same species.

'I have spoken to my father, sir.'

'Yes.' How different that yes

sounded from the same word when used interrogatively by 'plain old Rab'! Nothing harsh or querulous about it in this case: it merely seemed musically to lead the listener on to the next portion of his theme.

'And I must give up all idea of availing myself of your kindness. He won't help me in the least.'

'That is bad,' replied Mr. Pousnett. 'I am very sorry to hear such news. Tell me what passed. Sit down;' and the great man laid aside his hat, unbuttoned his top-coat, and resumed the chair he had so lately quitted.

It was not in the least degree difficult to talk to Mr. Pousnett: many men, indeed, had, at one time or other, found cause to curse the fatal facility with which speech seemed to flow from their lips in his presence; for Mr. Pousnett never forgot anything: the most careless sentence uttered in his hearing remained stamped in his memory, and was apt to be recalled to the speaker long after his random utterance had faded from his mind.

In five minutes, nay in two, Robert put him in possession of his father's views on things in general, his opinion of Mr. Pousnett's offer, and his determination neither to mull nor meddle in the matter.

'I *might* have had a chance if it had not been for Kenneth,' finished the young man gloomily; and it is to be feared, in his heart, at that moment, he wished anything but good to that more fortunate individual.

'Kenneth! who is Kenneth?' asked Mr. Pousnett, rousing himself from a reverie into which he seemed to have fallen.

'My brother, sir, the one I told you about who—'

'Who is to have the three

thousand pounds and the pretty wife?' interrupted Mr. Pousnett, laughing. 'I understand now; only you did not mention his name when speaking about him. A very fortunate fellow indeed, and I wish him all success in his business, and happiness in his marriage. By the way, what is the name of his future father-in-law?'

'Johnstone, sir—V. Johnstone & Son of Liverpool. The head of the firm must have been dead this hundred years, I think, for the present man looks about two centuries old.'

'V. Johnstone,' repeated Mr. Pousnett; 'do you mean Vincent Johnstone of Old Hall-street?'

'His place is in Old Hall-street,' conceded Robert gloomily.

'Then your brother has stepped into a good thing, a remarkably good thing,' said Mr. Pousnett thoughtfully, 'and I heartily wish him joy. A house in a small way, perhaps; but safe. I know no firm which, in its degree, stands higher. I do not wonder at your father's pleasure, particularly as it costs him nothing.'

'It would be a most remarkable thing which could please my father if it did cost anything,' said Robert, in a tone of conviction.

'I do not wonder at his refusal to assist you in the face of such a windfall as that you mention,' went on Mr. Pousnett blandly.

'O sir,' pleaded young McCullagh, 'I wish you would not mention this business and old Johnstone's in the same breath.'

'I am not comparing them,' said Mr. Pousnett benignantly. 'I was only trying to put myself in your father's place for a moment—trying to look with his eyes, and understand what he must feel. He seems to be, if somewhat narrow in his views,

a most astute man—so far as he goes a most remarkable man.'

Robert looked at his principal to see if he were in jest; on the contrary, Mr. Pousnett's face wore an expression of anxious and perplexed consideration.

'A most remarkable man. I should like to know him personally;' and here he paused again, whilst young McCullagh, fairly lost in amazement, stared with all his might at the countenance of his chief.

It is the specialty of fools that they ever fail to grasp the fact of unlikely men being wise.

Robert had always thought his father sharp, shrewd, mean, quick at a bargain, in a pottering sort of way a keen man of business; but it had never before, never once, occurred to him he was clever. Mr. Mostin was his ideal of a clever fellow. 'Lord bless you,' Robert would say, 'drop him when you like and he'll drop on his feet. *Only think of all the misfortunes he has passed through,* and how no sooner did he find one door shut before he found another open! I never saw such a man: full of resources, ready to turn his hand to anything;' and all the while he contrasted his father with this paragon, and thought in his heart, 'Ah, if Mr. Mostin only had the business in Basinghall-street, what would he not make of it!' utterly ignoring the fact that the ex-builder was one of those men who eventually make ducks and drakes of most businesses, and who, while an admirable manager in theory of their fellows' concerns, never prove equal in the long-run to managing their own.

'I do not think,' resumed Mr. Pousnett, after a pause, 'your father can have quite grasped all the advantages which would accrue to you and his other sons

were he to put you in the way of accepting my offer.'

'I am sure he has not, sir,' answered Robert; 'and what is more, he never will.'

'That is to be seen,' said Mr. Pousnett, leaning back in his chair, and half closing his eyes as he spoke. 'I think I must take him in hand. I want to have you as one of the house,' he added, with a delightful smile (people said Mr. Pousnett's smile was to him what the angel's veil of moss was to the rose); 'but I am determined you shall not enter it empty-handed.'

'I quite understand that, sir,' said Robert, in a downhearted manner; 'and I assure you I left nothing unsaid I considered likely to move my father to compliance. It was all to no purpose, however; I might just as well, better, have held my tongue; and so I have given up all thoughts of it, sir, and—and—I have nothing more to say,' finished Robert, dejectedly rising as he spoke, and pushing his chair as far as it would go under the table in a crazy absent-minded sort of manner.

Mr. Pousnett watched this manoeuvre curiously. There could be no doubt that the son at least understood the value of what he was losing.

'You have quite interested me in your father,' he said at last. 'I feel I must make his acquaintance. I will call upon him; no, I will ask him to dinner—cut his mutton with me, eh?—and we'll talk the matter over exhaustively, after we have finished cutting our mutton.'

'To dinner, sir? I don't think you exactly understand,' stammered Robert. 'My father—most worthy man, no doubt—had not any of the advantages in his early life such as fall to the lot of young men nowadays. He is not exactly

—don't press me—Mr. Pousnett, please to say what I mean !

'He is not exactly like anybody else, I suppose,' said the great merchant, laughing; 'indeed, I am very sure that he is quite different from most people. I *must* know him. I regret extremely no opportunity has before presented itself of making his acquaintance. I will write and ask him to dine with me; then we can talk this matter over.'

'I do not think, sir, you have any idea of what my father really is,' said Robert resolutely.

'I hope soon to have the pleasure of knowing,' was the reply.

'An angel could not lead and the devil could not drive him,' persisted young McCullagh doggedly.

'I have no gift either for leading or driving,' said Mr. Pousnett; 'but I mean to make your father's acquaintance, and hope our intimacy may prove profitable to both. Of course, I shall expect the pleasure of your company on the same evening this day week at seven;' and this time Mr. Pousnett put on his hat as a sign the interview might be considered at an end, opened the door, and walked, deferentially followed by Robert, across the office to the street, where, bidding his manager good-night, he passed out into the gas-illuminated darkness of a November night.

Mr. Pousnett was not a man who ever let grass grow under his feet; and accordingly next day Mr. McCullagh, sitting at breakfast, and 'supping his porridge' as a preliminary to the tea, fried bacon, and bread he had to follow, received a missive sealed with a great seal, bearing sundry heraldic devices intelligible only to the King-at-Arms.

'Bless and save us all, what's this?' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh,

whose eye was caught by the bold caligraphy and the pretentious coat of arms. 'It must be from the Lord Mayor at the very least! What an awfu' waste o' wax, to be sure !'

'It is a grand seal, though,' said Miss Nicol, taking up the envelope which Mr. McCullagh had tossed aside. 'Look, Effie, can you make out the words underneath? They're Latin, I am almost certain.'

By this time Mr. McCullagh had mastered the contents of the epistle, which he laid face downwards on the table.

'I'll give ye,' he remarked, commencing at the same moment a vigorous attack upon the basin of porridge which stood smoking at his elbow, 'I'll give ye three guesses to say who that letter is from.'

'Maybe from the Lord Mayor himself,' hazarded Miss Nicol.

'Or Prince Albert,' conjectured Effie.

'Or the Emperor of the French,' said Miss Nicol.

'That is three between you,' remarked Mr. McCullagh, chuckling; 'and all wrong. No, ye'd never guess if ye sat trying for a twelvemonth. It is from Robert's employer.'

'What's wrong now?' asked Miss Nicol; 'I thought he seemed sort of uneasy last evening.'

'Did ye?' commented Mr. McCullagh dryly. 'Well, there is nothing wrong. All the man says is, "Will ye take a knife and fork with us this day week in Portman-square?"'

'That is a good joke, too!' said Miss Nicol.

Never for an instant did that worthy lady think the statement other than a piece of the 'wut' in which it pleased the Scotchman occasionally to indulge.

'Joke! it is no joke,' answered

Mr. McCullagh. 'It is as civil a note as ever I read, and as well put together. What he says in effect is, Will ye take pot-luck with us in a homely friendly sort of way?'

'But you'll not go,' assumed Miss Nicol, jumping to conclusions too hastily, as her sex are wont to do.

'I don't know that,' answered her relative, who, indeed, till that moment, had not entertained an idea of accepting the invitation. 'Why wouldn't I go? What for should I affront the man by declining what no doubt he means kindly?'

'There is no reason, of course,' acquiesced Miss Nicol; 'only I thought ye didn't much care to consort with such grand folks.'

'It is not consorting with grand folks to once and away put my legs under their mahogany. I supped last night with Kenneth's master, and a right good tumbler of toddy he gave us. I may just as well eat my dinner with Robert's master. I never have seen him, and I am a bit curious to see him.'

'Here is Robert,' said Effie at this juncture; and almost as she spoke the door opened and that young man himself appeared.

'Find yourself a place!' cried Mr. McCullagh effusively. 'The tea is mashing; ye'll take a cup, won't ye?'

'I breakfasted an hour ago, thank you,' answered Robert, finding himself a place, however, as desired.

'Ye ken,' said Miss Nicol, who never lost an opportunity of dealing the young man a back-handed blow, 'he doesn't think our brew strong enough.'

'On the contrary,' Robert replied, 'I generally find it far too strong—bitter. I do not think tea ought to stand a minute.'

'Hoots!' cried Mr. McCullagh,

'how would ye ever get the good out of it if ye didn't let it stand? But tea is not the question now. I have just got a letter from your master asking me to dine with him.'

'He told me he meant to ask you last night,' said Robert, whose sole motive in coming round had been to ascertain whether Mr. Pousnett had carried his project into effect.

'And your father is going,' said Miss Nicol suggestively.

'Who told ye I was going?' inquired Mr. McCullagh. 'I asked ye what would hinder me to go, and I said I might as well eat my dinner with him as my supper with old Johnstone, and that I was a bit curious to see the gentleman; but I never said I had just made up my mind.'

'You won't go, though, of course,' remarked his son carelessly. 'I told him it was of no use asking you.'

'And why did ye tell him anything of the sort, and what should hinder me going? To hear ye both talk, any one might think it was an invitation from Windsor Castle that had come instead of a friendly note from a merchant like myself.'

'You mistake me, father,' said Robert, though, indeed, his father had not mistaken him in the least. 'All I meant was that, as you do not care much for visiting out of your immediate circle of acquaintances, I thought you would not fancy going so far as Portman-square; and besides—'

'Besides what?' asked Mr. McCullagh sharply.

'All those sort of people dress for dinner,' explained Robert desperately, 'and I did not know whether you had any clothes just suitable to go in.'

'What's the matter with my clothes?' cried Mr. McCullagh,

glancing first over one shabby shoulder and then over its fellow. 'I am sure this is a good enough coat for all ordinary purposes; but I have a better, Robert, don't be uneasy. If ye never have to put up with any more discredit than your father brings upon ye, ye'll have no cause of complaint;' and having so spoken, Mr. McCullagh handed his empty basin to Effie, who removed it to the side-board, and then brought a plate of bacon that had been simmering in front of the fire, which she placed before her benefactor.

'Try a wee, Robert,' said Mr. McCullagh hospitably. But Robert in answer only shook his head; he felt, indeed, at that moment as though food would choke him.

'Then I can tell Mr. Pousnett he may expect to see you,' he observed after a second's pause.

'Ye'll tell him nothing whatsoever from me,' answered Mr. McCullagh, discussing his bacon. 'I am not so helpless but I can answer my letters for myself, and make up my mind for myself too.'

'I meant no offence, sir.'

'And I have taken none,' was the quick reply.

'If you decide upon accepting the invitation, will you let me know? Mr. Pousnett has asked me as well, and we could go together.'

'I'll communicate with ye,' promised Mr. McCullagh; and, having gained no single point, save this, by his early visit, Robert, muttering something about being late at the office, took his leave.

'Mr. Pousnett seems to set great store by him,' remarked Miss Nicol, as the sound of the young man's footsteps upon the stairs died away.

'There's no reason why he shouldn't,' retorted Mr. McCullagh, who was great in opposition.

'Where would ye meet a straighter, better-built, better-looking, better-spoken young man than my son Robert? He's just a credit, even physically speaking, to any house. So far as looks are concerned, ye must admit, Janet, he's the pick of my sons. What do ye say, Effie?'

But Effie, who had stolen across the room to watch Robert's retreating figure till he turned the angle of the court, kept her face fastened upon the window-pane, and affected not to hear.

CHAPTER VI.

A FAMILY PARTY.

THE eventful evening arrived. Duly and truly Mr. McCullagh had signified his intention of making one at Mr. Pousnett's social board; and it is not too much to say that, during the days which ensued after his parent's decision was made known to him, the younger Robert suffered agonies.

Mentally he beheld his father in every likely and unlikely social scrape; clearly he heard every intonation of that remarkable accent grate upon his ear; in imagination he saw that mean ill-clad figure surrounded by rank, fashion, and those who were to the manner born. He fancied how the servants would stare at him; how the ladies would start at sound of a voice little, if any, sweeter than his national bagpipes; how Mr. Pousnett would repent his rashness; how he, Robert, would be covered with shame, and feel disposed to request the earth to open and swallow him up.

That fickle jade Ideality, which will not answer to our call when most we desire her company, and

insists on keeping step with us when we wish her miles away, never for one instant quitted Robert's side during the intervening seven days of misery. She never left him during the day; she influenced his dreams at night; she was for ever presenting to his consideration some almost impossible dilemma, and playing him even in sleep some scurvy trick, such as setting Mr. McCullagh down to dinner in his hat or without his coat, or making him insist on a 'cut of beef' while fish was still in progress.

It was only a week from the first intimation of that trouble till its consummation; yet, during the progress of that week, Robert fell away in flesh, and his face grew peaked and anxious. Mr. Pousnett beheld and smiled in private, but said nothing. Long before, he had taken the measure of his manager, and knew how to fit him like a glove.

All his trouble, however, had not prevented the younger McCullagh ordering a quite new suit of clothes, in which, well covered from sight by a top-coat closely buttoned, he appeared at the paternal mansion a little after six o'clock.

'You do look a swell, Robert,' said Miss Nicol, regarding with no particular favour the young man, who, standing uncovered in the dreary sitting-room, could not conceal his curly hair fresh from an artist's hand, his clean-shaven chin, his bright boots, his faultless collar, his white tie; 'doesn't he, Effie?' But Effie, who had been feasting her eyes upon this spectacle of manly beauty, again made no direct answer. Muttering something about her uncle, as she called Mr. McCullagh, wanting her, she hurried from the room, only to encounter that sage individual on the threshold.

'I am quite ready, Robert,' said Mr. McCullagh, coming briskly forward.

Like another famous personage,

'He was drest in his Sunday's best;'

and Robert, as he surveyed his parent, had never felt so near liking him before. He had never thought the 'sweetstuff-man,' as some persons called him, could have looked, not merely so decent, but so presentable.

Though Mr. McCullagh wore his clothes almost to the last thread, he always bought them of the best materials; and the consequence of this was that his best coat, which he kept for attending funerals, was of a quality neither tailor nor flunky could gainsay.

If it lacked the cut Robert's own swallow-tail boasted, it was perhaps more suitable to the rôle of a successful City man. There was an amplitude about its skirts which suggested a good balance at the bank; and in the loosely-tied bow of Mr. McCullagh's washing neckhandkerchief there was a defiance and an indifference a Rothschild or a great financier might have envied.

He had oiled his sandy hair, and shaven himself even cleaner than usual; into his manner he had imported a certain festivity of demeanour, which his son remembered well as an adjunct to those supper-parties where Scottish songs and Scottish anecdotes beguiled the length of an otherwise tedious evening; there was a scent of Windsor soap, and a perfume of fragrant linen and broadcloth laid aside with lavender-bags between, that seemed grateful to the younger man.

Inwardly he thanked his father for what he could not but consider concessions; it was really good of him, he felt. Perhaps, after all, he was reconsidering that

matter of the seven thousand pounds!

'Shall I get a cab, sir?' asked Robert, who had indeed brought his boots by that means spotless to the top of the court.

'A caub?' repeated Mr. McCullagh. 'The Lord presairve us, Robert, are ye mad? A caub, and the night fine and the stars shining! No, no, I am not just so tired of my hard-earned sexpences as to throw them away that gait.'

'I only thought we might be a trifle late,' said Robert hypocritically. 'Time is getting on.'

'Let it,' observed Mr. McCullagh; 'we'll be at Portman-square well within the hour. Good-night, Janet,' he went on; 'good-night, Effie. It'll be on to eleven before I'm back. Don't lose your beauty sleep, either of ye, for me.'

Gaunt and erect stood Miss Nicol during the progress of this amiable speech; meek and drooping, Effie.

'Good-night, Effie,' said Robert kindly, with a feeling for the moment stirring his heart that the girl's life was lonely and unnatural. 'Good-night, and be sure you don't forget the beauty sleep.'

'Ay, ay, mind that,' added Mr. McCullagh, groping his way down the grand old staircase, lighted by the mournful gleam of one sad dip held aloft by Effie on the landing.

Never had Robert known his father talk so much to him as they stepped briskly down Basinghall-street side by side. With his work-a-day suit Mr. McCullagh seemed to have doffed his ordinary manner, and discoursed on all sorts of subjects till Old Jewry was passed and Chesapeake reached, and it became

necessary to concentrate his attention on stopping a Baker-street omnibus.

No poor wretch who ever travelled the West-end route, surrounded with much state and circumstance, to Tyburn, experienced a greater sinking of the heart than young McCullagh, as the vehicle bumped and jolted along.

The demons exorcised for a few minutes came back now accompanied by legions of fresh doubts and fears.

Would his father expect the company to sit round the table and sing songs when dinner was finished, as had been the wont at those supper-parties Robert remembered as a boy? Would he, in the plenitude of his jocularly, ask Miss Pousnett to give them a stave? would he tell Mr. Pousnett, if he declared he had no voice, he would be let off with a good story or a bit of recitation extracted from Whistle Binkie? would he propose a toast, and suggest it should be drunk Highland fashion, by the gentlemen guests standing on their chairs and planting one foot upon the table? would he act as fogleman, and lead on the cheering? All these things, and many more, had Robert beheld, and he turned literally sick as he reflected what might be in store for him.

'You're no looking just the thing to-night,' observed Mr. McCullagh, as the omnibus drew up at Oxford-circus and the light from a lamp fell full upon his son's face.

'I have not felt well for some days past,' was the answer.

'I think ye are a bit over-anxious,' said his father. 'If ye would take a word of advice from me, don't fret about the matter. Supposing the offer does come to nothing, some day maybe

ye'll see it was all for the best,' from which cheering remark Robert gathered the seven thousand pounds was as far from him as ever.

'I am not fretting about that,' said the young man.

'What are ye fretting about, then?'

'I don't know that I am fretting about anything,' and then the omnibus jogging on again, conversation became difficult.

The door of Mr. Pousnett's house in Portman-square was opened by a butler whose grave and dignified demeanour seemed to impress even Mr. McCullagh with a feeling of solemnity. No archbishop ever comported himself with greater stateliness. The way in which he assisted the elder guest off with his coat and relieved him of his hat was a study; the hushed and suave voice that asked, 'What name, sir?' was one never to be forgotten.

As he might have gone to the scaffold, Robert ascended the stairs, which were covered with carpeting that felt like moss beneath his feet. He went so slowly, his father, who had skipped lightly on before him, had to pause on the landing; whilst the butler, who stood with the handle of the drawing-room door clasped in his fingers, looked upon the younger man's tardiness of progress more in sorrow than in anger.

'Mr. McCullagh—Mr. Robert McCullagh,' announced the butler, flinging wide the door.

Then it was done; the axe had fallen; the Rubicon was passed; they were in the bosom of the Pousnett family; their first experience of high society had commenced.

In the most genial manner Mr. Pousnett came forward to greet his guests. He was delighted to

make Mr. McCullagh's acquaintance; he was charmed to see him in his house; he felt his coming all the greater honour because he understood that, like a wise man, Mr. McCullagh thought there was no place like home.

'Let me introduce you to my wife,' he said; an attention Mrs. Pousnett declared was quite unnecessary, 'for I feel,' added that lady, who weighed about twenty stone, and had that dulcet smoothness of tone and manner which distinguishes fat people, 'as if we were old acquaintances. Come and sit near me, Mr. McCullagh, pray do. This is my eldest daughter, and that my youngest. You do not know Mr. Stoddard, nor Captain Crawford,' and as she mentioned each name she dexterously made Mr. McCullagh known to its possessor. 'And now we can talk comfortably. What lovely weather this is for the time of year! O, by the bye, I have not spoken to your son. Mr. Robert, I hope you will excuse my rudeness,' and again rising, she shook hands with her husband's manager in a very gracious manner.

And yet Robert had never felt himself so utterly a subordinate as at that moment.

After a short time two other young ladies entered the room, who were mentioned respectively as 'my niece Miss Vanderton, and my daughter Maude.' The party now seemed complete, and Mr. McCullagh, who was seated beside his charming hostess in the full glare of an immense fire, began to wonder when dinner would be served.

A mingled odour of many good things had greeted his nostrils as he entered the hall, and as, looking forward to the evening's dinner, he contented himself with a mere snack in the middle of the

day, he was beginning to feel hungry.

Proverbially there is no worse quarter of an hour than that which now ensued; and though Mrs. Pousnett did her best and Mr. Pousnett exerted himself to the utmost, it was a very bad time which intervened between the announcement of the guests and the reappearance of the butler on the evening that proved the turning-point in young McCullagh's life.

To his amazement, Robert found he was far less at ease than his father; that the latter took all the ease and luxury and magnificence of the house as mere matters of course, and viewed with the indifference of a Red Indian hangings and pictures and statues and screens and nicknacks that he himself was forced to glance at surreptitiously, his gaze seeming to be attracted to them by some power much stronger than his own will. Very good-naturedly the eldest daughter took pity on him, and invited his attention to some wonderful Indian carvings that ornamented a side-table; then she took him to the conservatory, which led out of the back drawing-room, and they talked about flowers, of which Robert knew but little, till they were joined by their hostess and Mr. McCullagh, who, it turned out, was much more at home in Flora's domain than his son.

He had seen good gardens in his youth, and remembered what he had seen. He was able to talk about the Duke of Hamilton's hot-houses in Arran, and the ferns and heather he had gathered in that island when he was young. He knew the names of many of the plants in the conservatory which were strange to his son, and could give Miss Pousnett a hint as to the mode of striking myrtles so as to insure their blooming.

Knowledge of any kind is sure to make its way, perhaps for the reason that, as a rule, people know remarkably little; and before she swept down the stairs to dinner, leaning on his arm, Mrs. Pousnett, who was a remarkably astute lady, understood Robert McCullagh was a well-meaning good-looking goose, while his father possessed all the brains of which the young man was destitute.

What a fairy scene that dining-room seemed to Robert! Its warmth, its comfort, the subdued lights, the appointments of the table, the silver, the glass, the china, the snowy damask, the noiseless and perfect attendance, the dresses of the ladies, the quiet repose of their manners: he had never seen anything like it before in all his life, and it came upon him with a new pang that such an existence might be his if only his father would listen to reason. As he thought of this, Robert looked very steadily at the author of his being, and was fain to confess he had never beheld a man less likely to be coerced or flattered into any course of action than the architect and builder of his own fortunes.

Amongst all that grandeur he sat unmoved as the Sphinx in the desert. There must have been things in connection with such a meal to try the equanimity of a man whose own domestic arrangements had always been of the roughest and readiest description; but Mr. McCullagh might have been sitting at great men's feasts all his life for aught any one could from his manner have told to the contrary. He was as quick as lightning; at any critical period one glance around told him what others were doing, and seemed to give him the needful hint. Robert, had he been gifted with a spirit of prescience, might have saved himself much unnecessary anguish

of mind. Whatever the father might feel, the son looked by far the more awkward. In his attempts at conversation with the daughters of the house, in his answers to Mr. Pousnett's remarks, in his evident fear of doing that which he ought not to do, and leaving something undone which he should subsequently call to remembrance with burning cheeks, Robert McCullagh was as evidently out of his element in Mr. Pousnett's dining-room as he felt in the paternal parlour.

Setting aside all social reasons for these results, the young man was anxious and nervous as to the upshot of the evening's proceedings. Would or would not his father be led to see the error of his ways, and delightedly make himself responsible for seven thousand pounds? Would the wealth and the grandeur and the kindness and the deference induce him to alter his decision? Would his pride be touched, his vanity flattered, his reason be convinced? Robert did not believe it. With a fainting spirit he addressed himself to the dinner, to which he brought but scanty appetite, and with all his heart and with all his soul wished the whole thing over.

Mr. McCullagh, on the other hand, was quite at his ease; he was passing through no alternations of hope and fear; he had quite made up his mind on the subject at issue, and so felt able to devote himself to doing the agreeable.

Captain Crawford had not long before been stationed in Edinburgh—indeed, he was of Scotch extraction—and he and the merchant talked of many things, in which Mrs. Pousnett also professed the keenest interest.

'We have spent some most delightful months in Scotland one

time or another,' she was good enough to say. 'I always tell my husband there is no place like it anywhere.'

'And you're very right there,' remarked Mr. McCullagh. 'Where would ye find a town like Edinbro', for instance, or, just to go no further, any scenery like that of the Clyde? Have ye seen the Holy Loch? No! And I mind me ye said ye had never been to Arran.'

'But we know the Burns country,' pleaded the lady, in extenuation.

'And have ye stood on the very spot, mem,' said Mr. McCullagh, warming to his work, 'where the witches got a hold of Meg's tail, and pulled it right away from—Ahem!' coughed the North-countryman, remembering just in time that the broad speech of his earlier youth might be somewhat out of place in Portman-square and the presence of ladies.

Mrs. Pousnett, however, took no notice of his confusion.

'I think we saw everything,' she said: 'the thorn-tree and the place where—what was her name?—hung herself; the old ruin where I really could conjure up that weird company—see the Evil One playing jigs, and Cutty Sark capering away to the delight of Tam peeping through the window. It is a most eerie place. Do you know, I dreamt of that old churchyard for nights afterwards.'

'For my part,' said Captain Crawford, 'I like Edinburgh better than any other portion of Scotland. Scott has invested the city and its environs with a charm it must retain so long as the ruthless hand of improvement passes it by. I never wearied of walking over Arthur's Seat, or exploring the Canongate, or mooning about Holyrood Palace. If it had not been for the hope of

being ordered abroad, I should have quite lamented returning to London.'

'Are you expecting marching orders, then?' asked Mr. McCullagh, who was amongst other things a keen politician.

'Sailing orders,' amended the officer. 'Yes, I trust we shall be sent to the Crimea ere long. It is dreadful to stay here idle, and think of all that is going on there now.'

He had struck the right vein; as the war-horse rushes to the battle, Mr. McCullagh plunged into the conversational abyss thus opened. With his keen eyes growing keener, with his sandy hair seeming to bristle like that of a rough terrier, with his heart on his lips and his soul in his face, the merchant held forth on the weakness, folly, incapacity of the Government.

'Every man of them ought to be indicted for murder,' he said; 'not manslaughter, but murder. They'll make England the byword of the world. I wonder what will be said in nineteen hundred and fifty-four, when people read how the best and bravest were left to die like cattle? And all for what? That red tape might assert its supremacy, and a wheen idle young puppies in Government offices make it appear as if they had something really to do.'

'I am quite with you there,' said Captain Crawford, as if at some far-away point he meant to differ from the speaker *in toto*.

'Now, Captain, pray do not disturb the peace of the household by introducing politics,' entreated Mrs. Pousnett. 'Mr. McCullagh, may I beg of you to abandon the Eastern Question?' and the lady laid a persuasive hand, on which glittered many rings, on the merchant's arm as she spoke. 'If you knew, if you

only knew the dread I have of hearing the word Crimea, you would pity me, I am quite sure.'

'I can't say I think you are alone in that dread,' observed Mr. McCullagh dryly.

'There now, I felt sure you would agree with me,' she said, 'in so far as this, at all events, that politics are better absent from the dinner-table. You have no appetite,' she went on, with a bland smile. 'Is there nothing that you like?'

'I have done very well, thank ye,' answered Mr. McCullagh, who had marked with amazement Mrs. Pousnett's gastronomic capabilities.

At that moment the lady took a goodly helping of cabinet pudding, remarking as she did so,

'It is said, I believe, that fat people are, as a rule, small eaters: if you ever hear that again, Mr. McCullagh, don't believe it.'

'I won't, mem,' he agreed, with a readiness quite unexpected.

It was irresistible. Mrs. Pousnett laughed, her daughters laughed, Captain Crawford laughed, and finally Mr. McCullagh himself joined in.

'I would beg your pardon if it had not been your own fault,' he said, when the merriment subsided.

'I do not think it was any one's fault,' Mrs. Pousnett replied, laughing again, and then fanning herself vigorously.

At length the dinner came to an end, the cloth had been drawn—incredible as it may sound nowadays, cloths were drawn six-and-twenty years ago—dessert had been partaken of, the ladies had retired, and then Mr. Pousnett, passing a decanter of fine old port towards Mr. McCullagh, said he thought he would find that a wine to his taste.

'It is verra good,' answered the

guest, taking a sip out of his glass ; 'sound, and of a rare vintage. But I tell ye fairly, Mr. Pousnett, in my opinion there never was the wine bottled could compare with old Glenlivat.'

'There is no Glenlivat in the house,' answered Mr. Pousnett ; 'but I have some Bushmills that is beyond dispute. Touch the bell, Charlie, will you?' he said to Mr. Stoddard, who evidently stood high in his good graces. 'No, no, Mr. McCullagh, let me have my way, please. It was stupid of me not to think of it before.'

So the whisky was brought by the butler, who looked as if he had never seen spirits in his life before, and who would—judging from externals—no more have thought of entering a public-house than a bishop might have done. To Robert's great relief both Mr. Pousnett and Captain Crawford 'mixed' for themselves, just, as the gallant officer remarked, to keep Mr. McCullagh company ; and when he and Mr. Stoddard declined to join in such wild festivity, the Scotchman made no remark save one disparaging to their heads, repeating at the same time the old advice concerning not sitting with their backs to the fire, or mixing their liquors.

After a time Mr. Stoddard seemed to get very tired of the whole affair, and hinted to Robert they at least could join the ladies. Nothing loth, the manager availed himself of the opening thus afforded, and ascended with his companion to the enchanted regions above blessed with the presence of lovely women.

Ere long Captain Crawford followed their example, and Robert then knew the eventful moment had come. Probably at that instant Mr. Pousnett was breaking the ice. Well, nothing

good would come of it—of so much he felt certain.

In a kind of stupid despair he glanced around the paradise out of which he was to be cast for ever.

The mirrors, the rich hangings, the soft carpets, the deep luxurious easy-chairs, the subdued light, the leaping fire, the pictures, the ornaments, the statuettes, the numberless adjuncts which make up what is called the furniture of a modern drawing-room, mingled all together as in a dream before his eyes. There were the perfumes of flowers too, and the tones of music. These were the surroundings amid which the Pousnetts and thousands like them lived every day ; and he, Robert, might have been one of that happy band—not a chief, perhaps, but a happy subordinate—if Heaven had only gifted his father with what the young man mentally styled 'commonsense and notions like other people.'

The young ladies played and sang. Mrs. Pousnett from the depths of an armchair addressed at intervals some pleasant remark to a guest she could not but see was ill at ease. Mr. Stoddard and Captain Crawford concentrated their attentions on the daughters of the house, and Miss Vanderton. It was an awful time of suspense to Robert, worse than any quarter of an hour before dinner ever endured by hostess ; the minutes went by slowly, coffee was carried round, time passed on at a funeral pace. At last there was the sound of voices on the staircase, the drawing-room door opened, and Mr. McCullagh, followed by Mr. Pousnett, entered the apartment.

Robert looked at his father—he was wonderfully brisk and gay in his demeanour ; then his glance travelled to Mr. Pousnett, whose

face wore an expression of the blindest serenity. Mr. McCullagh went direct to the fireplace, and began to talk to his hostess concerning some knitting which she was holding in her taper fingers.

'Why,' she said, laughing, 'it seems to me you know something of everything. Now my husband is unable to tell knitting from netting, and can recognise no difference between crochet and tatting. How is it you understand such matters?'

'I suppose it is because I have aye kept my eyes open,' answered Mr. McCullagh modestly. 'That is a nice song your daughter is singing,' and he turned his head slightly on one side to listen.

'She knows several Scotch ballads,' remarked Mrs. Pousnett suggestively.

'Does she, now?' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh.

'Yes; and she will sing one for you if you ask her.'

'I will do that,' was the eager answer; and Mr. McCullagh moved with the quick sidling walk which was one of his peculiarities towards the grand piano, where Mr. Pousnett already stood conversing in a low tone with Mr. Stoddard.

Miss Pousnett's song finished, Mr. McCullagh preferred his petition. If she could give him just one of the ballads of his native land, he'd be thankful. He could fancy how that lovely voice of hers would sound in 'The Land o' the Leal' or 'A wee bird cam' to my hall-door.'

'I'll sing anything you like that I happen to have, Mr. McCullagh,' replied that young lady pleasantly. ('No saying I canna or I wunna about her,' as Mr. McCullagh explained afterwards.) 'What shall it be?' She went on turning over the leaves of a music-book handed to her by

Captain Crawford. 'There are a great many Scottish ballads in this.'

'And Miss Pousnett has been good enough to let me teach her the proper pronunciation,' observed Captain Crawford.

'That's a verra important point,' said Mr. McCullagh gravely.

'How can he go on talking such nonsense,' thought Robert, 'while I am fretting my life out on the hearth-rug?'

Finally a song was selected, one Mr. McCullagh was good enough to tell the company he had not heard for forty years—'Flora Macdonald's Lament'—and forthwith Miss Pousnett commenced her accompaniment, her latest admirer beating time all wrong, as people do beat it with hand and foot and head, the while he kept an appreciative eye on her handsome profile.

Just as she sang the first bar Mr. Pousnett made the slightest possible sign to his manager, and walking towards the conservatory, stood looking at the flowers with apparently absorbed attention till Robert joined him.

'It is best to put you out of your misery at once,' began the great merchant; 'your father won't listen to my proposition.'

'I knew he would not,' said the young man, in an access of despair.

'Well, I thought he would; but I am forced to confess you were right and I wrong. He is a wonderfully clever man, would be a delightful man to do business with, only—'

'He is as obstinate as a pig,' broke in Robert angrily.

'I did not mean to say that,' observed Mr. Pousnett; 'but he is prejudiced—very; and owing, I suppose, to the limited circle in which he has moved, his view, both of men and things, is narrow.'

'I should think so,' agreed Mr.

McCullagh's son, with scornful emphasis.

'I confess I did not believe the man lived who would have been blind to the advantages of a partnership in our house,' went on Mr. Pousnett.

'There is not another man living who would be blind to them but himself,' said Robert.

'However, I feel the matter is at an end now,—that he will never reconsider his decision.'

'No, that he will not,' acquiesced the other mournfully.

'I think you believe I have done all I could for you.'

'I am sure you have, sir; and I can never feel sufficiently grateful for your kindness.'

'Thank you for saying so; it makes what I have to observe not quite so difficult of utterance.'

'Yes, sir,' Robert spoke firmly, but his very heart died away within him.

'It is this,' proceeded Mr. Pousnett, stooping over a rose as he spoke. 'Under present circumstances I shall not be able to keep you on as manager.'

Just what his father had prophesied. In a dumb frenzy the young man stood waiting Mr. Pousnett's further utterance.

'Had I supposed for a moment your father would refuse to help you, I never would have suggested such a thing as a partnership to you, but I cannot now repair that error. I raised your hopes in ignorance of your true position, and I am very sorry for it. I will do my best, and you must do your best, to get a good berth; plenty of firms will be glad to take a person recommended by me; but I cannot keep you on. It would be an awkward position for us both; your own excellent sense will tell you a man who once expected to be partner in a house would never again be quite satisfied with a

subordinate position in it. Just now, perhaps, you may imagine you would be, but I know to the contrary. It is best we should part, and you may rely on my exerting myself to the utmost to get you a situation as good as that you hold now, if not better.'

'Do you wish me to go at once, sir?' asked Robert, in a choking voice.

'At once? Of course not. I have no intention of casting you adrift in that fashion. Only we must part, remember. I have thought it better to say this to you to-night here, rather than to-morrow at the office; and now we won't talk any more about the matter. You look pale; of course this has been a blow to you. Better come down-stairs and have a glass of wine.'

But the discarded clerk would not go down-stairs; in a blind sort of way he determined to remain in paradise till the very last minute.

He felt he might never have another chance of reëntering it, never mix even on the semblance of equal terms again with his employer's family.

'Just as you like,' said Mr. Pousnett, kindly tolerant. 'I cannot tell you how sorry I feel for your disappointment, and how vexed I am with myself for an interference which has ended so disastrously.'

'You are very kind, sir,' murmured Robert; and they returned to the front drawing-room just as Miss Pousnett was ending a second Scottish ballad for the delectation of Mr. McCullagh.

How much longer the concert might have lasted is uncertain but for Mr. Stoddard saying it was really time for him to go, he had no idea it was so late.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Pousnett said it was not late or begged him

to remain longer; they took it quite as a matter of course he should leave; and seeing this, Mr. McCullagh followed his lead, and remarked to his son it was time they were thinking about making their way home too; thanked Miss Pousnett for her 'music,' and advanced to bid Mrs. Pousnett good-night.

That lady, with her knitting trailing behind her, met him half-way.

'*Must* you go, Mr. McCullagh?' she said sweetly, quite pressing his hand as she held it in hers. 'I am so sorry; it has been such a pleasure to see you. I am *delighted* to have made your acquaintance.'

'I am going too; I will walk with you a little way,' volunteered Captain Crawford, as Mr. McCullagh was about to say good-bye.

Mr. Pousnett went down into the hall with his guests, and, urbane to the last, thanked Mr. McCullagh for coming so far, and hoped he would not take any cold. 'Good-night, Crawford; we shall expect to see you next Monday, of course;' and then the butler held the front door wide, and they passed out into the square, and paradise was left behind, and Robert and his fortunes were pacing the cold wet pavement. It had come on to rain slightly, and the external air, after the genial warmth of Mr. Pousnett's room, felt chill and damp.

But the dull night and the slight drifting rain did not seem to affect Mr. McCullagh's spirits in the least.

He talked to Captain Crawford volubly as they went along.

'Ye'll no forget,' he said at length, 'that ye promised to give me a call. I'd be proud if ye would; and ye shall give me your opinion of what I call

the best whisky that ever came south.'

'I will be sure to come, thank you,' said the Captain politely.

Robert did not shudder now; what did it matter to him who came or who went, who stayed away or stopped? It could not alter his position or make his prospects any brighter.

'My road lies in this direction,' remarked Captain Crawford when they reached Oxford-street, pointing towards the Marble Arch. 'I shall have to bid you good-night now.'

'Good-night, sir,' said Mr. McCullagh, who had taken for the officer one of those singular predilections which at once set reason at defiance, and seem to have no origin in instinct. 'Good-night, and I wish ye weel.'

'I am sure I am very much obliged to you,' replied Captain Crawford; and having so spoken, he took his departure, and the father and son were at last alone.

'We may as well walk on,' observed the elder; 'it's a trifle cold standing at this corner.'

'It is enough to perish one to death,' said Robert.

By the aid of a street-lamp they were passing Mr. McCullagh stole one swift look at his son's face; what he saw in it probably suggested his next remark.

'What a lot of timber they have in those rooms, to be sure!'

'I don't think I quite understand you, sir,' answered his son.

'Furniture—furniture, I mean,' said Mr. McCullagh quickly; 'mahogany's timber and rose-wood's timber and ebony's timber, aren't they?'

'Of course,' agreed Robert. 'Yes; I never was in so handsome a house.'

'What a trial it must be to a

man to have such a mountain of a wife always before his eyes !' was the next genial observation.

'Mrs. Pousnett is considered a very fine woman,' objected Robert irritably.

'She is a very weighty one, at any rate,' said his father.

The younger man deemed it best to make no comment on this undeniably true statement, and they accordingly walked a few yards further in silence.

'They are a surprisingly pleasant family,' Mr. McCullagh again broke ground. 'I can't recall to mind ever meeting with so many agreeable people living under one roof. I wonder,' he added, 'if they are as pleasant when they are alone.'

'I do not know why they should not be pleasant,' answered Robert, with some asperity, 'when they are all of one mind.'

'I believe ye're right there,'

said his father, with a short laugh. 'I do think they are all of one mind.' Which observation suggested so many disagreeable deductions, that the young man felt thankful to find the omnibus they hailed so full there was only room for one inside, which fact necessitated his climbing to the knife-board.

Nevertheless he insisted on walking with his father home to the very door, though Mr. McCullagh said, 'Hoots ! there is no need ; no need at all.'

The little attention must have pleased him, however, for he observed at parting,

'I won't ask ye to come in to-night, Robert, for it's late, and ye ought to be in your bed ; but if ye can call round in the morning after breakfast, any time before ten, I'd like ye to do so ; there is a matter I want to speak a word to ye about.'

(To be continued.)

A GREAT FRENCH ACTOR.

Of the hundreds who witness a theatrical performance, not one in ten, even amongst educated persons, has the least suspicion of the method and the means by which the thing is done. For the vast majority acting is merely another form of improvisation, as far as the personal representation of a character is concerned. The actor has only to learn by heart the words of his part more or less perfectly, dress himself in befitting costume, step on the stage before the public, and the spur of the moment does the rest. Rehearsals are supposed to be held for the purpose of assuring the management and the actors themselves that they can really repeat without book the sentences set down for them; and also of acquainting each actor with what his fellow-players have to say and do, and with the scope and story of the play as a whole when all the separate parts are put together. For so much is known, that many theatrical pieces, new ones especially, exist only in manuscript, and cannot, therefore, pass through the hands of each separate actor, or, even if published in print, are not so readily at hand that every performer can read them just at the moment when he requires to do so. Beyond this the popular mind scarcely penetrates deeper into the mystery of a dramatic performance.

Improvising a part may, indeed, besometimes an unfortunate necessity with second-rate overworked provincial players. When a poor fellow has to personate five, six,

or more different characters during the course of a week, time and physical strength are absolutely wanting to give the preparation which a metropolitan actor would, or ought to, devote to the perfecting of each separate part. No day can by any stretch be made to contain more than four-and-twenty hours; so that, deducting the time occupied by actual work on the stage, including dressing and undressing before and after, the time exacted by indispensable sleep and meals, with a brief interval of outdoor exercise if possible, the remnant left for study is but small. If the words only of his multitudinous parts can be acquired so as to dispense with the prompter's aid, the provincial actor has accomplished a very respectable achievement. The rest must be effected as well as may be, but certainly not so well as might be. True, an old-established actor has his *répertoire*, or stock of parts already learnt and got up, to fall back upon. But the getting those up requires time and leisure, which implies the means of living in some way or another; besides which, even stock parts require refreshing from to time, otherwise they would slip out of the memory. Unavoidable cases, as those of hard-run actors, certainly do countenance the vulgar error that, the words excepted, the actor's art is all impromptu. Even those cases, however, are fewer than the public supposes. It is often the actor's poverty, and not his will, which consents to improvise. He is unconsciously tutored and

guided in his part by tradition, hearsay, what he has seen others do, and continual association with the members of his craft.

Nevertheless, if people would but think a little, they might see that it is not so very easy a task to represent a dramatic character satisfactorily. They know that a sculptor, before executing a group or even a single figure, considers well beforehand the idea he wishes to express and the best means of expressing it. The statue has existed and been prepared in his imagination before it goes forth to the world in solid marble. They know that a painter, about to depict an event, whether fictitious or historical, makes his sketches, his studies, his compositions, correcting, retouching, refining the work, until the picture which satisfies his aim is finally produced. It is a result of labour, time, and thought.

But the actor is a living statue; he makes himself the leading object in an ever-changing picture. It is not one attitude, or one moment of a story, which must be adequately represented; there should be no falling off, inconsistency, or failure from the beginning to the end of the performance. We may hence make some slight estimate of the thoughtful art and training—not to mention natural qualifications—needed to produce a perfect actor or actress, whose vocation may be regarded as sculpture and painting endowed with vitality and speech.

Sundry examples of diligent preparation for the work are given in M. Legouvé's excellent treatise, *L'Art de la Lecture*, which has already reached more than twenty editions. To his first piece, *Louise de Lignerolles*, in which Mlle. Mars acted, no fewer than sixty-eight rehearsals were devoted. Afterwards Rachel under-

took the part, in which one scene of about thirty lines exacted, both from the actress and the author, three whole hours' study—an excellent example of mutual instruction. The lady's ambition was at least to equal her distinguished predecessor. Therefore there was not a single one of the three or four hundred words composing this scene but was turned over and tried in every sense, in order to hit upon the true and touching accent. Those three hours were really hours of artistic labour.

The same authority supplies another equally striking example. Children, in their unrestrained talk, are natural and interesting; but when they read aloud or recite what they have learned by heart, they immediately become monotonous and dry. In that same piece, *Louise de Lignerolles*, M. Legouvé had written a part for a little girl, which was confided to a graceful and intelligent child only ten years old. At the general rehearsal the little actress did wonders, and a spectator in the orchestra, close to the author, exclaimed, while he applauded her, 'What truth! what simplicity! How easy to see she has not been drilled into that!' But, in reality, during the previous month M. Legouvé had done nothing but tutorise her, intonation by intonation. Was the part, then, beyond her age? By no means. He had even borrowed from his youthful pupil many of those original expressions which children instinctively employ. But when the same expressions were incorporated into her part, when she had to speak instead of talking, they were no longer spoken in a natural tone, and it took a considerable time to bring her back to her natural self and to teach her again what she had

taught her master. Consequently, reading aloud or speaking is so truly an art that it has to be taught again to those who have themselves instructed us.

When quite a little boy, the relative with whom I was staying in London thought that one easy way of filling up my evenings was to stick me every night behind the scenes of Covent Garden Theatre, in a nook where I could witness all that passed without being in anybody's way. The scene-shifters got used to my presence, and would shift me occasionally, when required, but always leaving me in an excellent place. There I saw Miss M. A. Tree's delight at her triple encore for 'Home, Sweet Home'; Charles Kemble's physical exertions to sustain the material weight of Falstaff; and Mrs. Vining's trepidation in an Easter piece, lest she should fail to catch the puppet baby which an eagle had carried off, and was made to let drop. But what I best remember was the careful and conscientious conduct of Mr. Young, at that time playing Hotspur, I think. Instead of remaining in the green-room, to be summoned by the call-boy, he awaited his turn behind the scenes some time before his entrance on the stage was required. There, entirely absorbed in his coming scene, speaking to no one, looking at no one, he paced backwards and forwards, making himself as completely at ease in his costume as if he were walking the streets in his everyday clothes, and repeating in an undertone, but with perfect expression and intonation, the speeches he was about to utter in front of the canvas screen. So that, when the moment for his entrance arrived, he appeared in full and sole possession of his part, ready to give it complete and en-

tire effect, undisturbed by other thought or preoccupation. Comic actors like Duruset the singer might whisper coarse jokes, to put handsome gentlemanly Abbot out, and make him laugh, while repenting, as the would-be wicked Duke, in *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*; but no one ventured to play such a trick with Young, or would have been tolerated had he ventured it.

The minutely detailed life-history, if we could only get at it, and especially the rise, of every great actor, would afford abundant evidence of the laborious effort by which he had climbed up to eminence. In the memoir of Frederick Lemaitre, recently published,* those efforts are taken for granted as a matter of course, rather than insisted on at each step of his career. But from other sources we have ample proof of the thoughtful study by which advancement was secured, and that even when a new character turned out only a half-success, it was through some shortcoming on the part of the author or the subject, and from no lack of due care or other fault of the interpreter. Nor is hard work the only difficulty with which the candidate for dramatic honours has to struggle. In Dumas the Elder's play, *Kean*, there is a scene in which a young lady consults the hero respecting her wish to adopt the theatrical profession. He compares it to a medal stamped with two crowns, one of flowers, the other of thorns. After tracing a sombre picture of the troubles and disappointments to be encountered from the very outset, of the jealousies and intrigues of her rivals, who would stick at nothing to prevent her success, he tells her what she must expect from (of course French) newspaper critics.

* *Souvenirs de Frédéric Lemaitre. Publiés par son Fils, avec Portrait. (Paris: Ollendorff 1880.)*

'You do not know our journalists,' he says. 'Some, regarding their mission in its honourable aspect, are partisans of whatever is noble, defenders of all that is worthy and good, admirers of everything grand and sublime. Such men are the glory of the press, the precursor angels of the national judgment. But there are others whose impotence to produce anything of their own has driven them to take up the critic's trade. These writers, jealous of everybody and everything, defame what is noble, tarnish what is good, and endeavour to abase whatever is grand.'

Lemaître (whose father was architect to the city of Havre, where he founded a gratuitous school of drawing and architecture) was born there, at noon, on the 11th Thermidor, year VIII. of the French Republic, one and indivisible—which, being interpreted, means on the 28th of July 1800—and was named Antoine Louis Prosper. Frederick, which he afterwards adopted, was the name of his grandfather, for whom he entertained a warm affection. Losing his father by the curious accident of a fall through the prompter's hole in the Havre theatre, he was sent to Paris at eleven years of age, and attended as a day-scholar the Collège Sainte-Barbe. But after the freedom of a seaside life, the confinement of Paris did not agree with him. His mother consulted a doctor, who prescribed amusement and going to the play. A good many boys would cheerfully fall sick, if they were sure of having the same remedy ordered. Frederick was taken to the Ambigu that very evening, and while there resolved to be an actor. Strong resistance was made by his mother, and especially by his grandmother, who urged that, by

going on the stage, he would risk his salvation in the world to come. His uncle Coussin, now the head of the family, took his part. He became ill, and the women yielded, on condition that, while training for the *théâtre maudit*, he should earn a trifle as clerk in some architect's or builder's office. For they were far from rich. The widow Lemaître was obliged to give piano-lessons to live.

By dint of perseverance he obtained admission to the Conservatoire as *élève auditeur*—listening pupil—in the class of Lafon the tragedian, who perceived that the lad was intelligent, but had plenty of hard work before him. He lisped frightfully, with a strong Norman accent; and the best thing he could do for the present, they told him, was to keep his ears and his eyes wide open, which, Lemaître himself remarks, was either very little help, or a very great deal. It turned out to be the latter. He was then earning at a notary's, as under-clerk, *saute-ruisseau*, or skip-kennel, thirty francs a month, which he scrupulously took home, minus a few sous spent on classic authors, or on slipping into the play under the wing of the *claque*, the professional distributors of applause in French theatres.

Most young actors elect to come out in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, or something of the kind. Frederick's first part was the Roaring Lion in *Piramus and Thisbe*, at the Théâtre des Variétés-Amusantes, whose title (like that of the Ambigu-Comique) scarcely described its performances. For instead of the amusing farces which one would expect, it gave serious and heroic pantomimes, such as *Jerusalem Delivered*, the *Siege of Granada*, and the classic love-tale in which our Frederick made his *début*. The circumstances were

not flattering; but it was better to appear even in a four-footed character than to remain for ever, untried and idle, on the shelf.

After playing mute biped parts in *Les Chevaliers de la Mort* and *La Clarinette Enchantée*, he was engaged by Bertrand, then manager of the Théâtre des Funambules, which, by cultivating the Italian style of pantomime, occupied at that time a higher position in the theatrical scale than it afterwards did. He began as a savage in *Harlequin Robinson*; then he was an apothecary's apprentice in *Harlequin hatched out of an Egg*; and so on, until he and the famous Débureau became popular, almost to spoiling, with the public. The part of Count Adolphe, in the *Faux Hermite*, crowned his rising reputation. From that day the ladies always spoke of him as 'handsome Count Adolphe.' 'And the fact is,' he adds, with amusing complacency, '*j'étais très joli*—the italics are his own—'I was very good-looking.'

Having attracted Franconi's notice, he was next engaged at the Cirque Olympique; but between the horses and guns on one side, and the clowns and wild beasts on the other, he found the space assigned to the actors much too narrow. So, the following year, by his teacher Lafon's advice, having been accepted as a *pensionnaire* by the second Théâtre-Français, he exchanged Franconi's French infantry for the Roman infantry of the Odéon. But even there he was not in his element. He listened, as the silent confidant, to Agamemnon's or Orestes's long tirades until the blood boiled in his veins because there was almost nothing for him to say. In this state of suppressed ambition, the offer of an engagement by the managers of the Ambigu-Comique

was eagerly accepted, 'Here at last,' he said to himself, 'is the ground on which I can fairly try my strength.'

He first appeared (March 1823) in a revival of *L'Homme à Trois Visages*, an ordinary melodrama, in which, nevertheless, he achieved an honourable success. Then came several unimportant pieces; and finally the eventful *Auberge des Adrets*, a melodrama of the most sombre and sinister type, intended by its authors to be the horror of horrors. Frederick had to 'create' his part of Macaire, and was puzzled what to do with it. How was he to get the public to accept a coarsely cynical personage, a highway robber and murderer, frightful as the ogre of a fairy tale, who outraged common sense so far as to scratch his whiskers with a dagger while eating a bit of Gruyère cheese?

One evening, while turning over the manuscript of his part, it struck him that all the situations and speeches assigned to Robert Macaire and Bertrand would be exceedingly diverting if treated in a comic vein. He confided the idea to Firmin, a clever fellow, who was equally disgusted at having to personate a tragical Bertrand. Firmin thought the notion sublime. The two conspirators kept their plan a secret, not allowing a hint of it to escape at rehearsal, and it was not until the first performance that an oppressive nightmare was found to be metamorphosed into an irresistible buffoonery. It was received with shouts of delight, and, moreover, drew. The managers made no complaint of a success which they confessed they little expected from the piece; two of the authors were consoled, by the money receipts, for causing roars of laughter instead of showers of tears. A third collaborateur, one Dr.

Polyanthe, vowed never to forgive the actors' treachery. He went about bemoaning to all who would listen that they had 'assassinated' his melodrama. Poor man! It was only a pardonable outburst of paternal affection.

Since the details in the personation of a character and what is called the 'business' of a part are apt to be lost with the disappearance of its first representative, instead of remaining visible for centuries like a picture or a statue, great pains are taken to preserve them by the traditions of the theatre. Thus, the Français boasts that it still perpetuates the tradition of what was done in Molière's time. Discrimination, nevertheless, is desirable and even necessary in the adoption of theatrical precedents. A mere stage accident may be made, by blunderers, to take the place of an accepted tradition, however unmeaning and irrelevant to the point. Here is an instance:

When Frederick was playing Georges, in *Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life*, with Madame Dorval as Amélie, in the third act that lady wore a cap made of lace or some other inflammable material. In the scene where Amélie takes from Georges's hands, to sign it, the deed by which she makes over her dowry to him, Madame Dorval leaned so close to one of the candles standing on the writing-desk that her cap caught fire, and a serious accident was inevitable had not Frederick, without saying a word, instantly torn the cap off the actress's head, extinguished it between his hands, and put it in his pocket. The action was so spontaneous, that Madame Dorval, quite unconscious of its real cause, stared at him with stupefaction.

Those of the audience who had perceived the danger applauded ;

and next morning a journal complimented Frederick on his presence of mind, adding that any other actor in his place would have shouted 'Fire!' and called for the engines.

But amongst the spectators who had seen and suspected no more than the action of a man simply snatching off his wife's cap and stuffing it into his pocket was a provincial actor, who, hearing the applause, said to himself,

'That is an effect I should never have thought of!'

Some time afterwards, having to play the *Gambler* in the chief town of one of the Departments, the aforesaid actor took good care not to forget the cap effect. The instant Amélie approached to sign the deed, he violently pulled her cap off her head, and as adroitly thrust it into his coat-tail pocket.

The public, taken by surprise, muttered audibly and looked about uneasily, fearing a case of sudden insanity. The actor, hearing no applause, said to himself, not in the least disconcerted,

'The stupid fools! They don't appreciate it!'

Two days subsequently a subscriber to the theatre, after complimenting him on his remarkable impersonation of Georges de Germany, ventured to ask,

'But why the deuce, in the third act, do you tear off Amélie's headdress and put it in your pocket?'

'Ah, you do not understand?'

'Not the least in the world.'

'Why, it is one of Frederick's most powerful effects!'

'One of Frederick's effects!' exclaimed the subscriber. 'Well, certainly I should never have suspected it!'

And that is how some few traditions arise. Frederick never made a goose of himself in that way, because he was original and

inventive, copying no one, and could give a good artistic reason for the slightest item in the composition of a part.

Chance or destiny gave Frederick, as partner in his numerous creations, Mdlle. Sophie Halignier, whose rare qualities, &c.—the elegance and dignity of her figure, the sculptural curve of her shoulders, her Grecian head, her multitudinous other charms—were all that a lover delights to describe. Mdlle. Halignier successfully played with him the *Diamant*, the *Remords*, the *Cocher de Fiacre*, *Lisbeth, ou La Fille du Laboureur*, and finally the *Vieil Artiste*, a melodrama in three acts, by Frederick himself, in which she filled the part of his daughter, expressly written for her. Their daily inter-

course led him to reflect that he was much too young to remain always her father. She, too, on her part, confessed that she felt no repugnance to change her *emploi* or line of characters for one more congenial and sympathetic. Two months afterwards he led her to the church of the Petits-Pères, where, and at the evening ball, they would have been honoured by an artistic assembly worthy of a princely wedding but for the occurrence of a sad event—namely, the death of Talma that same day.

And now, having married our hero, like the novelists, we land him there, leaving the reader to pursue his future career in the *Souvenirs*, published by his son.

A SAILOR'S YARN.

Through Smythe's Channel, Straits of Magellan.

HOMEWARD bound ! What a thrill of delight does the old tune wake in our hearts ! The sailors at the capstan trudge round to its familiar strains as they have not done these four weary years ; for are not our orders for England on board ? and homesick west-country bluejackets remind one another, as they heave with a will, that we are to be at Plymouth in seventy days.

The captain of the maintop, bending his gaunt form across a hatchway, accosts our smallest midshipmite :

' Beg yer pardon, sir ; but how far might we be from Devonport ?'

' Not much more than 8000 miles,' squeaks the youngster, hugely delighted that his opinion should be asked ; and with a satisfied ' Thank'ee, sir,' and touch of his forelock, the gigantic ruler of topmen resumes his work, humming to himself the while, to the not very mellifluous lucubrations of our blind fiddler :

' When we gets safe to Plymouth docks
The pretty girls comes down in flocks,
And each to one another says they,
" Here's Jack come home with four years' pay."

Clink, clink ! sounds the cable in the hawsepipe. ' Heave and away, sorr !' shrieks the little Irish boatswain from his perch forward ; and so we weigh anchor and shape our course for the Southern Seas. Our homeward track from the Pacific will take us into a corner of the world about which English society seems strangely ignorant. The average ' well-informed' Briton, if confronted with questions as to the topographical features, the cli-

mate, or the means of existence, religion, government, and economy of the races scattered over the thousands of square miles adjacent to Smythe's Channel, will, perhaps, at first vaguely generalise, but in the end be compelled to admit himself supremely ignorant of them all.

Such, at least, was the condition of the present writer, until brought face to face with the glorious mountain scenery which is the distinctive feature of this district. For the benefit of those who may be in a similar predicament, be it observed that, between the archipelago of closely-packed islands which stretch from Cape Penas to the Straits of Magellan and the mainland, winds for nearly six hundred miles an intricate channel. Few Europeans have explored it, and none have attempted to reside there, or open up a trade with its wild inhabitants. The aboriginal Patagonians (a scanty race not unlike the North American Indians, but still lower in the scale of humanity) are left to fight their battle for existence, unmolested by the ' civilisation' and ' fire-water' of the paleface, which have wrought such havoc with the unhappy red man. The line of mail-steamers to the Pacific avoid it, dreading its sinuous turnings, rushing currents, and misty weather. Its channel, too, in some places barely two hundred yards wide, renders it impassable to sailing vessels, so that until the introduction of steam the adjoining district was almost *terra incognita*.

But to the navigator who is willing to take the risks, it offers smooth water, and an immunity from those fearful storms which have made the weather in the vicinity of Cape Horn a byword amongst sailors; and as such we chose it.

Our cruise down the western coast of South America, from Coquimbo to the Gulf of Penas, is devoid of incident; the two all-important factors, storm and shipwreck, being luckily wanting to give their special interest to the voyage. Towards the evening of the tenth day, land is sighted right ahead, and it is definitely settled that, weather permitting, we shall enter Smythe's Channel the following morning. So we adjust compasses and reexamine charts, and at early dawn stand in for the entrance to the channel.

As we draw towards the coast, the towering masses of granite, of which it is composed, become more clearly defined. The mighty Pacific swell has eaten through the smaller crags, lapping as it seems the very foot of the Andes. Huge mountains, rising sheer out of the sea, shut in the view ahead, their bases clad in forests of firs; above, the bald, gray, or lichen-covered rock, and with summits yet deep in winter snow. Albatrosses, resting sleepily on the oily water, start up as we approach, and sea-lions snort defiance at us. But a fleecy mist hanging round the bases of the cliffs augurs badly for our progress to-day, at least if it increases. It is a curious sensation, this slipping along at considerable speed, straight towards an iron-bound coast; for, as yet, no entrance to the strait is visible.

Just as we are beginning to think we have missed the channel altogether, the bluff outstanding mass of verdure on the left, which had hitherto appeared part and

parcel of the mainland, opens out from the rest, disclosing a watery avenue on which the rising sun glints cheerily. As we watch it the islet assumes more and more the form of a huge broad-brimmed hat, and we recognise Sombrero Island and the entrance to Smythe's Channel.

The low-lying fog threatens every instant to settle across our path, debarring further progress, so we push on at speed. By eight A.M. the land has closed in on either hand to such a degree that an error in a turn of the helm may put us on the rocks. Suddenly the mists descend, enveloping the ship in a soft impalpable rain, and limiting our vision to fifty yards all round. To stop the engines is the work of an instant; and so we lie a log upon the waters for nearly twenty minutes, all hands on the look-out for the land which we know is only too close. At last the fog lifts, just in time to enable us to wriggle from an unpleasant propinquity to the western shore; and unveiling a magnificent stretch of water, with lofty snow-capt mountains on either side, as far as we could see.

On the flat outlying rocks, within a stone's throw of the ship, some seals are basking; the wash of the screw as we move the engines disturbs them; the sleek bullet heads are raised for an instant, the next with a simultaneous flop they disappear.

So the day wears on, each turn of the channel disclosing fresh views of a savage grandeur which is almost awful. Sometimes, where the channel narrows and the mountains tower highest, a bridge of cloud forms overhead, making the water round us inky black, and giving a weird cavern-like appearance to our path in front. Then we emerge again, and the fickle sunlight falls on

pleasant valleys and slopes of open country, with deep luxuriant grass, and scattered clumps of timber, among which guanaco and dappled fallow deer are feeding. Flocks of wild geese pass over our mastheads, craning their long necks curiously from side to side, in wonder at the infrequent sight.

Towards noon we enter the most intricate part of the channel, English Narrows, and for two hours our whole attention is absorbed in the delicate operation of steering our vessel through them. These once passed, Indian Reach, although by no means simple navigation, seems broad by comparison; but here, as well as everywhere in this badly surveyed locality, a vigilant look-out is, as we subsequently found to our cost, necessary to avoid dangers unmarked on the chart.

It is with a feeling of relief to our highly strung nerves, therefore, that we observe the entrance to Port Grappler, and, changing our course, glide round a tiny islet so close that the trees overhanging the water almost touch the ship, and drop anchor in a fairy basin among the mountains.

Before the echoes of the rushing cable have died away among the hills, sportsmen are off to try for snipe and wild-duck. Pulling ashore through fields of kelp and seaweed, we make for a tiny cascade at the upper end of the harbour, and land on a beach of rough boulders, with marsh and rushes in between, from which at every step the snipe get up.

The banging that ensues, multiplied by the echoes, would do credit to a Volunteer company skirmishing, and at first the bag fills rapidly.

Two of our number, more ambitious than the rest, force their way through the marshy land to where the hills rise abruptly, hop-

ing, perhaps, to get a shot at deer or guanaco. They agree to fire three shots in succession from the waterside as a signal when they want the boat sent on shore for them; and so we wish the enthusiasts adieu.

We who stop behind have good sport amongst the fens, and return on board in the gloaming after a four hours' tramp, mostly over our boots in water, thoroughly tired, and quite ready for dinner. Counting the bag, we have nineteen couple of snipe, three brace of ducks, two geese, and a teal; a sum-total with which we are quite content.

As the gloom deepens, and no shot is heard from the shore, some little anxiety is felt for our 'deer-stalking' messmates; but an overpowering sleepiness and the thoughts of the morning watch conquer all my misgivings, and I turn in.

Alas for my night's rest! I seem barely to have been asleep half an hour when a gruff voice outside my cabin-door informs me that it is 'Twelve o'clock, sir; officer of the watch's compliments, sir, which Lieutenant Fyson 'e ain't fetched on board yet, sir, which you'll have to keep 'is watch for 'im, sir.'

With a growl not loud but deep at the prospect of this midnight vigil, and a strong tendency to swear at our truant messmates, I hasten on deck.

It is raining hard and very foggy; and the first gust of wind, as it whistles down from the snows above us, turns all my annoyance into profound apprehension for the well-being of the unfortunate votaries of the chase exposed to its icy blasts, without shelter, on such a night as this.

The face of the officer of the watch whom I relieve reflects my

fears; neither he nor the look-outs have seen or heard anything from the shore, and he dreads the worst. But to attempt to search the hills in this black darkness would be worse than useless, and so he dives below, and I am left in undisputed charge of the ship.

Even in that land-locked harbour the blustering wind has raised a slight swell, and the vessel lurches over from side to side with an uneasy creaking.

The two middies of the watch, having, as they consider, discharged their duty by bringing me up a basin of steaming cocoa, go through the formula of asking permission to read in the chart-house, and are soon sitting back to back, each with his book on his knees, deep in the arms of Morpheus.

I trudge wearily round the upper deck, cautioning the look-outs to be specially careful to report any lights on shore, examining the cables, and finally resume my beat on the quarter-deck.

Gradually my suspicions that my waterproof, so trusty four years ago, is failing me at last, and leaking, are merged in the certainty that I am thoroughly wet to the skin, and then, but not till then, the rain ceases. The squalls become less heavy, and finally die away, and at half-past three the clouds drift asunder, and the moon shines out on a still night.

Suddenly a look-out comes trotting aft on tiptoe of excitement.

'I seed mun, zurr, I seed mun straik a light to yonder by the water-side!'

Half a minute's careful watching satisfies us that there is a light burning dimly on shore in the direction he indicates.

Our departure is appointed for five A.M., and it wants but five minutes to four. An hour is but a short interval in which to search

the bush for the wanderers; so I resolve to take a boat on shore immediately.

Leaving one of the midshipmen in charge of the ship, I step into the boat as eight bells is struck, and make for land as rapidly as twelve pairs of stalwart arms can propel me.

At first we seem to have struck upon an *ignis fatuus*; the coxswain of the boat declares he can see nothing; and only now and then, and faintly, do I distinguish a red glow reflected on the tree-trunks. Ten minutes' pull, however, brings us near enough to set all doubts at rest; and another quarter of an hour lands us among the coarse grass and rushes on shore.

Strict orders are given for no man to leave the boat; and with a couple of volunteers the search is commenced lantern in hand. Groping our way over stones and stumps of fallen timber, seldom all three on our legs together, we quickly near the light, and reach it, to be disappointed and amused at the same time.

The source of the glow is a fire of logs kindled under the shelter of an upturned canoe. Stretched between the boat and a rude scaffolding of poles is a *tente d'abri* of coarse matting; and sprawling round the fire, in attitudes the reverse of picturesque, are some half-dozen natives.

Paterfamilias, perceiving our approach, has sprung up, and is screeching some unintelligible gibberish at his somnolent offspring, while he casts about him for his bow. No time is to be lost if we wish to avoid a practical proof of his skill as an archer, so we make a simultaneous onslaught upon the unhappy child of the forest.

'We don't mean yer no 'arm!' vociferates the burly coxswain; but the poor wretch only strug-

gles the more, convinced that his last hour has come.

Meanwhile, the hideous brood are upon us; and, for a few seconds, our position, assailed right and left by the gentle daughters of Eve and a squalling progeny, is far from enviable. At last, however, a chaw of baccy from my pouch quiets them, and we sit down round the embers to palaver. It is no easy task to describe the sublime ugliness of these unfortunate mortals. Spare, wizen, monkey-like, squatting among the damp fern and limp half-cured deerskins which form their unsavoury bed-place, how immeasurably better off are the beasts of the forest than they! Despite the coldness of the weather, they are but thinly clad; and poor shivering burnt-umber coloured humanity proclaims itself from many a rent in their scanty garments.

While I moralise thus, an ingenious code of explanatory signs, verbal gymnastics, and the deaf and dumb alphabet, is being exercised by my companions, in the vain hope of extracting some news of our shipmates from mine host.

Just as we are on the point of giving up the endeavour in despair, a rustling in the bush above transfixes us; and soon, to my intense relief, the 'deer-stalkers' crawl into the encampment, more dead than alive.

Instinctively we grasp their ice-cold hands and draw them to the fire, with incoherent words of welcome and congratulation; and then, before another sentence is uttered, a liberal 'drop of the creathure' is administered on medicinal grounds.

Somewhat revived by its cheering influence, the 'patients' stretch their half-starved limbs before the warmth, and proceed to recount their adventures.

It is the old story. Having fired at and, as they believed, wounded a deer, they had followed him, on and on through the woods, taking no heed of the fast-falling night. After wading torrents, splashing through marshes, and scaling precipices until they were tired out and every cartridge was wet, they had found themselves in the gloom of the primeval forest, some four miles from the ship and without matches, at eight o'clock at night.

In attempting to return in the darkness they had narrowly missed breaking their necks; and after weary marching and counter-marching, slipping down water-courses, and stumbling at every step over obstacles formidable in the daylight, and doubly dangerous at night, they had been fain to take refuge under a projecting rock, fearing to move lest worse things befell them.

But the icy blasts soon admonished them to be moving if they did not wish to be frozen to death; and so they had spent the night, sometimes wandering aimlessly on at the imminent risk of their necks, sometimes crouching together under the lee of a bush, until they had spied the Indians' encampment. And being here, they very roundly swore that never, no, never, would they risk such another night in the forest. Torn, bleeding, hungry, dazed with the cold and darkness, they certainly presented a pitiable appearance; and I am inclined to think they will keep their vow.

For half an hour more we sit talking over the fire; the horrific grunts of mine host and his two spouses more than ever convincing us that we have fallen among harmless, but hopeless, maniacs.

The first streaks of morning are in the eastern sky as we bid them adieu; and as we stumble away

through the doubtful gray light, the strident tones of the savage are heard addressing a few words to his wives, of which we easily conceive the import.

So we reach the boat, and arrive on board just in time to hear the order, 'Hands shorten in cable.' Soon the anchor is tripped, and we are softly stealing out of harbour; a shrill screech as we pass the Indian encampment bids us farewell, and the little bay is left for perhaps another decade to its pristine solitude. The day is bright and fine, and our artist-soul is stirred to try and transfer some faint representation of the views through which we are passing to canvas. With some such idea we are on deck all the morning 'sketching from Nature.' Would that I could give the reader a notion of the matchless panorama through which we are moving. Word-painting must always be incomplete and unsatisfactory where the object of it is, beyond words, beautiful—else imagine all that is most glorious in the cliffy Hebrides, of dancing water, seaweed-covered rock, and hanging wood, enhanced by the mysterious blue which distant hills and eternal snows give to Alpine scenery. Alternate these with park-like tracts, such as Thames meanders through between Ilfley and Cookham, but without the stiffness begotten of hedgerow and chessboard squares of turnips, and perhaps a faint conception of the pictures we would fain be drawing may be formed.

'Kelp right ahead, sir!' sings out a voice from the masthead; and simultaneously there is a

grating noise under the bows, a sudden shock, which upsets my easel, and the nose of the ship slides upwards upon a sunken shoal, where the chart says thirty fathoms. Before we have time to realise the gravity of the situation the engines are racing full speed astern, and we have the satisfaction of seeing that she is moving off. She leaks slightly, but is otherwise little damaged, and we resume our journey—with diminished confidence in the charts, and at a very slow speed, however.

As the latitude increases, bergs and floating fields of ice add a new danger to the voyage; and whales are seen more frequently.

On, through Icy Reach, Innocentes Channel, and Guia Narrows, until late in the evening Puerto Beuno affords us a berth for the night. Here such a draught of cod and whiting is caught as keeps the ship's company in fresh fish for a week.

Two more days' hard steaming brings us to Magellan Straits, which are too well known to need description. The weather is too cold now for comfort, and we don our winter garb, and make all snug for the wilder Atlantic waves which we are soon to enter.

Summing up our impressions of Smythe's Channel, we conclude that, to the artist, the sportsman, the lover of free Nature for her own sake, or the man of science, the adjoining districts offer a new and glorious field for exploration; but to the merchant or man of business as such, it is to be feared that they will long remain of very doubtful value.

THE DON DONE.

A Cambridge Ballad.

THE Reverend Septimus Benjamin Snorter
Was a Peterhouse don of the very worst water.
His parents (of course they were 'honest, though poor')
Took in washing to keep the grim wolf from the door.
Huge were the talents which Benjy had shown
At an age when, to some children, books are unknown :
His schoolmaster's pride, and his playmates' aversion,
In learning a Solon, in habits a Persian.

Multiplication and subtraction ;
Every sort of vulgar fraction ;
Stocks, shares, practice, and proportion ;
Birectangular contortion ;
Pure, but nasty, mathematics ;
Hyperbolic hydrostatics ;—
All were swallowed down like water
By the infant S. B. Snorter.

Soon the reputation spread in the vicinity
Of this fact-devouring, boy-pedant divinity ;
And dwellers by his native stream him planned to banish from it,
Fearing sudden conflagration by this intellectual comet.

So the hat was sent round,
And subscriptions were found
Sufficient to send Master Snorter to college ;
Though there were some who thought
The asylum rates ought

To accommodate gratis such sufferers from knowledge.

Never boating, seldom walking,
Never fives or cricket playing ;
Always at the Union talking ;
Very rarely ever straying

From the limits of the town,
Duly clad in cap and gown.
Chance or luck had never led him

Where the eights in measured time,
Flashing oars and hard-held rudders,
Churn to foam the ancient slime.

Fat he grew on tawny port, and
Steaming 'goes of something short,' and
What he called 'Perry Jouvier,' but undergrads call 'Cham ;'
And our hero little thought, he
Would find himself at forty

Near the elongated cesspool by geographers termed Cam.



Recommended by his doctor
 To become the Senior Proctor,
 And, with bulldogs* twain attending,
 To follow, slyly wending,
Unsupplied with academicals, the wary undergrad;
 He had singled out his victim,
 Who by accident had kicked him
In a town-and-gown November row with Barnwell's burly cad.
 Looking round, the victim stated •
 To the Proctor isolated
 (For the bulldogs were both occupied some four-and-twenty deep),
 That he really thought he couldn't—
 Or, if he could, he wouldn't—
Try a customer so wary to come upon asleep.
 'I have seen you pant and waddle
 As you take your dinner toddle,
And as for really running, why, I hardly think you can;
 And you can't, you wise old schoolman,
 Be so like a common fool, man,
So brutelike, so unmanly, as to chase a brother man.'
 Now the Proctor was on duty,
 And, on being called a brute, he
Looked round him for assistance, and, seeing none, stood mute;
 Then, though twenty years the older,
 Flung his gown from off his shoulder,
Pressed his cap down on his forehead, and started in pursuit.
 He bethought him of Corœbus,
 That light of foot ephebus,
Whose running so completely knocked all others out of date,
 That the whole Athenian nation,
 Overcome with admiration,
Set their calendar anew by him for purposes of state.†
 'Fast, fast with heels wild spurning'
 The undergraduate fled;
 Round the corners deftly turning,
 Always twenty yards ahead;
 And the crowds all split asunder,
 Incredulous with wonder.
Even lack of academicals caused no one any fears;
 They rejoiced, with feelings venomous,
 To see their common enemy
Take to running on compulsion now first for forty years.
 No policeman seemed to mind them,
 And the bulldogs failed to find them,
 As they left the town behind them
 And riverward both ran;
 Where the path was wet and greasy,
 And the Proctor very wheezy,
 So that running was not easy
 To that now repentant man.

* Twin satellites, in human form, of the Proctors, or University police.

† The Olympiads, or time-measures of Athenian history, date from the victory of one Corœbus in foot-racing, in B.C. 776.

Have you ever chased a plover
 Feigning lameness near the cover,
 Which she hopes her little chickens may attain to unperceived?
 So the Proctor, bent on bagging,
 Thought he saw his victim lagging,
 And a single-handed victory within his grasp believed.
 But, as they neared the ferry
 Of an ancient man and wherry,
 Responding to the signals of the victim, was he 'ware;
 And the don, revived with rapture,
 Planned a most dramatic capture,
 A sort of imitation of the famous Trent affair.
 Every nerve straining,
 Rapidly gaining,
 Less grew the gap between hunted and hunter;
 Each from his distance
 Makes signs for assistance
 By means of the punt and its wondering punter.
 'Here, Charon, I'm willing
 To give you a shilling
 To take me alone!'—and the prey is on board.
 'Hi! you on the water—
 I'm—Mr. B. Snorter—
 The Proctor!'—the boat had pushed off from the sward.
 * * * * *

The Reverend Septimus stood there alone,
 His bulldogs, his breath, and his quarry were gone;
 The boat was moored fast on the opposite side,
 No voice to his cries and entreaties replied.
 How to find his way back he knew not at all;
 He was too late for chapel, and too late for hall.
 Each public-house, even when come to, was shut—
 He slept for the night, one of ten, in a hut;
 And in the dim morning, unfed and unshaven,
 Found shelter in shame in his own college haven.
 He resigned his appointment as Proctor at once,
 And resolved on a mean betwixt pedant and dunce:
 In less than a week from that 5th of November,
 He had his name down as an honorary member
 Of the cricket and boat clubs; he gave up his port,
 And became (for a don) an 'uncommon good sort.'
 He died in his rooms; and, having no son, he
 Bequeathed to the victim the whole of his money,
 'In grateful remembrance' (so ran the bequest)
 'Of a day which first taught me *mens sana* was best
In corpore sano; acute, not obtuse,
 To see in a don's life its use and abuse.'

CoddENHAM.

FORTUNES MADE IN BUSINESS.

XXII.

MR. S. C. LISTER.

On Saturday the 15th of May 1875, the Right Hon. W. E. Forster stood up in one of the public parks of Bradford, the centre of an immense concourse of people, and there unveiled a marble statue erected by subscription to commemorate the industrial achievements of Mr. Samuel Cunliffe Lister. The honour thus conferred was a very exceptional one, inasmuch as the statue was erected during the lifetime of its subject, and was a genuine expression of gratitude on the part of a large section of the manufacturing community for benefits derived from Mr. Lister's invention and enterprise. Away from his own field of operation the world knew little of Mr. Lister, deep as the impression was that he had made on England's productive power in the forty years of his devotion to the worsted and silk industries. 'I doubt, after all,' said Mr. Forster, on unveiling Mr. Lister's statue, 'whether we are come here to do honour to Mr. Lister so much as to do honour to ourselves. We wish to do honour to those working faculties which have made our country of England a practical, and therefore a great and prosperous, and a powerful country. It is this untiring unrelenting industry which Mr. Lister possesses, this practical understanding, this determination to carry out any object which he is convinced ought to be carried out, and his determination to fear no opposi-

tion and to care for no obstacle: it is these practical faculties that have made England what she is. What is it especially that we are honouring? It is the pluck which this man has shown; it is the feeling that, having to do with the worsted trade, he said to himself, "Here is something which ought to be done; I will not rest until I have found out how it can be done; and having found out how it can be done, where is the man who shall stop me doing it?" Now, it was upon that principle that he fought his long struggle; and so when we read the story of his struggles, ever since 1842, in his two great inventions, we raise this statue to the man who has successfully fought the battle, and hope that our sons and the sons of all, rich and poor together, will come in after days to admire it, not merely because it gives them the form and features of a rich and successful man, but because it gives them the form and features of a man who was endowed with industry, with intellect, with energy, with courage, with perseverance; who spared himself no pains in first ascertaining the conditions of the problems he had to solve, and then whose heart never fainted, whose will never relaxed, in determining to carry out those conditions.'

Mr. Lister's life has been spent amongst inventions. He has registered more patents than any other man in England, and in

carrying out improvements in machinery, of one kind and another, has spent fortune upon fortune; always, however, holding on until success has been won, when his outlay has come back to him fourfold. His career has been marked by two leading episodes. The first portion of his history is prominently associated with the perfecting and bringing into operation of the woolcombing-machine, at which he laboured with unswerving devotion for many years; the second period of his commercial life has been concerned in the invention of machinery for the manipulation of silk waste, theretofore treated as refuse, but now made the basis of many beautiful fabrics in velvets, silks, plush, and other kindred materials. Several hundred thousand pounds were expended by Mr. Lister in respect of the woolcombing-machine before it yielded him a penny; but when once it reached a practicable shape and came to be accepted by the trade, the return he obtained for his labour was on a scale so princely as to put the gains of all previous inventors into the shade. Mr. Lister received as much as 1000*l.* per machine as patent right. Then, in regard to the silk-waste manufacture, his experience has been much the same. Mr. Lister was 360,000*l.* out of pocket by his operations in this direction; indeed, he wrote off a quarter of a million as entirely lost before he began to make up his books again. Still, in 1865, he found himself sole master of the position—possessed of a valuable invention and without a competitor, English or foreign.

To tell the story of Mr. Lister's life from the time when, while yet a mere youth, he entered upon a commercial existence, to the period when, at the last general election, he was prevailed upon

to come before one of the great county constituencies as a parliamentary candidate still in commercial harness, would be to tell the history of two important branches of our textile industries. We cannot attempt to do more than give the rough outlines of such a career.

Mr. Lister was born in the Waterloo year at Calverley Hall, near Leeds, being descended from one of the old county families, the Listers of Manningham. When Mr. Lister was some two or three years old, his father, Mr. Ellis Cunliffe Lister, removed to the family mansion of the Listers, Manningham Hall, and at this seat Mr. S. C. Lister continued to reside for nearly half a century. When Bradford became a parliamentary borough in 1832, Mr. Ellis Cunliffe Lister, in conjunction with Mr. John Hardy, father of the present Viscount Cranbrook, was elected M.P. The position of the family was such that, although Mr. S. C. Lister was but a fifth son, it was never imagined he would adopt a commercial career. In fact, a very different destiny had been marked out for him. From his boyhood he had been taught to regard the Church as his future field of labour, and he was educated with this view. To make this course still more definite, his grandmother bequeathed him the Rectory of Addingham, on the express condition that he should take holy orders.

It was not to be, however. The world was just then full of 'mighty workings': the steam-god was revolutionising the industrial world, the picturesque valleys of the West Riding were fast becoming dotted with towering factory chimneys, the spirit of invention was everywhere abroad, and the heart of young Lister

throbbed with strong yearnings as he saw all these signs of activity spreading around him, and he longed to make one of the great army of workers. It must have been a source of infinite sorrow to the family to find that their efforts to train up a pillar of the Church from one of their number were doomed to failure, and that he had determined to 'soil his hands with trade.' But, conscious of what was within him, S. C. Lister made his resolve and stuck to it; and the result has been, not that he has tarnished the lustre of an ancient name, but that he has given a brightness to it that centuries of simple county magnates could not have equalled.

Mr. Lister was educated at a school on Clapham Common, and then, instead of passing forward to the University, as it was at first intended he should have done, he obtained a position in the counting-house of Messrs. Sands, Turner, & Co., Liverpool. While holding this appointment, Mr. Lister made several voyages to the United States, where he made himself well acquainted with what was going on in the shape of invention and enterprise. Those were the days of sailing vessels, and trips across the Atlantic were looked upon as something extraordinary; so Mr. Lister got some little fame for his knowledge of American affairs, his friends alluding to him generally as 'American Sam.'

When Mr. Lister came of age he prevailed upon his brother, Mr. John Cunliffe Kaye, to enter into business with him at Manningham. Their father built them a mill, and there the future inventor of the woolcombing-machine first came into contact with the thousand and one yet unsolved problems of the worsted trade. Power-looms had been in use in this manufacture some ten

years, and the spirit of opposition with which their introduction had been met had now, to a great extent, subsided. Still there was an immense amount of hand-labour retained in the preparatory stages of the manufacture, the hand-wool-combers, amongst other operatives, forming a large and important section of the industrial community. Often, as he watched these men at their work in their homes, and observed the unhealthy nature of their employment—the work having to be done in heated rooms, amidst the fumes of oil and charcoal—Mr. Lister must have said to himself, 'I will give my mind to accomplishing this by the aid of machinery.' Mr. Kaye only remained a partner for about two years, retiring on the death of his brother, Mr. W. C. Lister. Not long afterwards Mr. S. C. Lister gave himself up to the work with redoubled vigour, taking into partnership Mr. James Ambler. For a few years the Manningham business went steadily on, Mr. Lister gradually feeling his way into the different branches of the manufacture, carrying on both the spinning and weaving operations.

Thus matters went on quietly and successfully, until Mr. Lister got the necessary prompting to take the field as an inventor from having his attention directed to a combing-machine which Mr. George Edmund Donisthorpe was trying to work out. Many other inventors had tried their hands upon such an apparatus before Mr. Donisthorpe, but without obtaining any valuable result, and at that very time other inventors were at work in France and America trying to solve this problem. No wonder this was the case, when we come to consider the magnitude of the prize which awaited the man who could first

really solve it. Combing was one of the chief operations in the various textile manufactures, and the inventor who achieved the perfect machine might reckon upon drawing countless thousands from the cotton and worsted lords of the North. But all these efforts of inventors, all these attempts to produce a machine that should comb wool as well as it was combed by hand, were regarded with scepticism and suspicion. Spinners could not be brought to take an interest in the thing, and as for the woolcombers themselves, they simply laughed at the idea of any one presuming to imagine that their labours could ever be effectually superseded by machinery: they might spin and weave by machinery; but the manipulation of the fleeces by the combs was, they thought, altogether too delicate a process to be successfully accomplished by mechanical contrivance. When it became known, however, that 'American Sam' had taken the combing-machine in hand, some of them began to sing a different tune, for already Mr. Lister, young as he was, had achieved a reputation for shrewdness and tenacity of purpose.

Mr. Lister was quick to perceive that in Mr. Donisthorpe's invention there was the germ of such a machine as would entirely abolish the hand-comber, so he made him an offer for it, which was accepted. He then took Mr. Donisthorpe into partnership, and, with their interests united and their skill concentrated on this one object, they thenceforward worked together with patience and diligence, until eventually they succeeded in bringing out a machine which gained the acceptance of the trade. What weary vigils there were, what days of toil and thought and anxiety,

what an accumulated expenditure of money, before that vantage-ground was reached! 'Forty-two years,' said Mr. Lister on one occasion, 'I was never in bed at half past five in the morning.' Mr. Lister gave all his fortune to the project, as well as all his time and all his energy.

Having seen Messrs. Lister & Donisthorpe before the public with a combing-machine that was capable of doing all that had previously been done by the hand-combers, it will be well to glance at what had been done, and was being done, by others in the same field. Dr. Cartwright, the inventor of the powerloom, took out a patent for wool-combing by machinery so far back as the year 1790, but it never got into practical use. A Mr. Robert Ramsbotham, some three or four years later, erected a combing-machine in Bradford. He appears to have experimented with it until he became convinced that there was nothing to be made out of it, and it is related that he at last had it carted away, taking his hat off to it as it disappeared, and wishing it good-day. Messrs. Platt & Collier introduced a new combing-machine in 1827, which was a great improvement upon anything of the kind that had, up to that time, been invented; still, it did not answer its purpose altogether, and found but little favour in the trade. The most important worker in this direction, however, was a Frenchman, Joshua Heilmann. Heilmann was a native of Alsace, and was brought up to the cotton trade. After spending some time in Paris, acquiring a good store of mechanical knowledge, he went to Vieux-Thann, and took charge of a cotton factory there for some of his relatives. He invented several improved machines, and was decorated with

the *Legion of Honour*. At length he conceived the idea of inventing a combing-machine, and became so absorbed in this one project that he lost all taste for other work, and fell into the depths of poverty. Mr. Smiles has told us and Mr. Elmore has pictured for us how, one night, while Heilmann was sitting by his hearth, 'meditating upon the hard fate of inventors and the misfortunes in which their families so often become involved, he found himself almost unconsciously watching his daughters combing their long hair and drawing it out at full length between their fingers. The thought suddenly struck him that if he could successfully imitate in a machine the process of combing out the longest hair, and forcing back the short by reversing the action of the comb, it might serve to extricate him from his difficulty. . . . Upon this idea he proceeded, introduced the apparently simple but really most intricate process of machine-combing; and after great labour he succeeded in perfecting the invention.' How far Heilmann's ideas clashed with those of Mr. Lister and Mr. Donisthorpe, and who was first in the field, may best be gathered from Mr. Lister's own words. Speaking at a public dinner a few years ago on trade subjects, and referring more particularly to some remarks which had been made in regard to his woolcombing inventions, he said, 'I have received, perhaps, more than my fair share of credit for that machine. I have always wished to do justice to those associated with me; and Mr. Donisthorpe and myself were, I consider, the parties who mastered the difficulty. I am not jealous as to the antagonism of English inventors; but I am anxious that Englishmen should have the credit of the in-

vention. Some people have put Mr. Heilmann forward as the inventor of the combing machine; but before Mr. Heilmann's patent was heard of we had succeeded in mastering all the difficulties connected with the invention. I, therefore, claim the combing-machine, as well as the spinning machine, as an English invention. I do not claim it for myself: I only claim that I am entitled to a fair share of credit for its success.'

There is little doubt that the adaptation of the combing-machine to the purposes of the worsted trade was mainly due to Mr. Lister. How much of the actual principle was invented by him it would be hard to say; but he not only threw out valuable ideas for perfecting it, but assisted others in every possible way to surmount the difficulties of the invention. In 1850, 1851, and 1852 many patents for improvements in wool-combing machinery were taken out by Mr. Lister and Mr. Donisthorpe, and in the last-named year they and the proprietors of Heilmann's machine got into litigation. The latter claimed that Heilmann had patented a woolcombing-machine in England in 1846, and the verdict of the court was against Messrs. Lister & Donisthorpe. Mr. Lister, however, maintained that the machine which he and Mr. Donisthorpe had introduced was superior to Mr. Heilmann's, and in order to substantiate this effectually, he bought Heilmann's patents for woolcombing for the sum of 80,000*l*. It may be stated also that six Lancashire firms paid a similar sum for the right of Heilmann's machine for the cotton processes, and that Messrs. Marshall of Leeds gave 20,000*l*. for its use in the flax trade, so that the ingenious Alsatian would reap in this country altogether a sum of 80,000*l*. for his invention. Mr.

Lister would naturally have relinquished the machine upon which he and Mr. Donisthorpe had spent so much time and money, had he been satisfied that Heilmann's machine was superior to it; but, instead of doing this, he simply set Heilmann's invention aside, and proceeded with increased energy to perfect his own. Ultimately Mr. Lister succeeded in producing a better machine than any that had previously been introduced to the trade, and obtained for it almost universal acceptance. As he approached the end of his task, and even after it was fully accomplished, he became hemmed in on all sides by rival inventors, and for a few years he was put to great cost in defending his position against one and another in the courts of law.

Machine woolcombing was now an unassailable fact. The hand-woolcombers saw their trade taken from them at one stroke. There were to be no more festivals in commemoration of Bishop Blaize, their patron saint. The poor operatives were powerless. In vain did they protest that the machine-combing was inferior to the hand-combing; the results pointed to the reverse of this. In vain did they hold meetings, and attempt to get up an anti-combing-machine agitation; the movement never had vitality enough in it to be worth while opposing. The hand-combers' handicraft had suffered total collapse, and was altogether past praying for. Thus it came about that in the course of a short year or two there was not a hand-comber left; all had been absorbed into other accessorial trades or had taken refuge in emigration.

Meanwhile Mr. Lister found himself at the head of a woolcombing business such as the world had never before dreamed of. He had successfully overcome

all opposition, and now established himself at Manningham as a sort of woolcomber king, possessing the command of one entire branch of the worsted manufacture. The works at Manningham were enlarged, and branch establishments were set up in Bradford, Halifax, Keighley, and other places in the West Riding; and still Mr. Lister was unable to keep pace with the demand. The ball of fortune was now at his feet, and he had nothing to do but keep it rolling. With all these concerns in full swing, Mr. Lister, as may be imagined, had his mind pretty completely occupied; still, his ideas expanded with his business, and in course of time he started woolcombing works on a large scale in France and Germany. The money he made during the few prosperous years which now ensued must have been enormous; but, for all that, he had his misfortunes, some of the managers at his branch-establishments failing to perform their part of the business compact satisfactorily, entailing great loss and inconvenience at times upon Mr. Lister. It was in his German speculations, and in one or two of his concerns near home, that Mr. Lister was led most astray; but he was possessed of indomitable energy, and no matter how often those in whom he put his trust failed him, he had always courage and perseverance enough left in himself to carry him over every difficulty. The establishments which he set up in France proved ultimately to be the most successful concerns of their kind in the world. Mr. Isaac Holden accepted the post of managing partner of these places, and worked them with great advantage; ultimately, in 1857, when Mr. Lister withdrew from them, taking them entirely

upon himself, and advancing them, in coöperation with his sons and partners, to the point of preëminence which they hold at the present time. For several years Mr. Lister continued at the head of these numerous establishments in England, France, and Germany, and reaped the advantage of his invention to the fullest extent, and made himself a high reputation in the world of commerce. All this time he had not suffered the combing-machine to rest at the point at which he had made it practicable. He still directed his attention towards its improvement, as did many others, and several important additions were made to it as time went on. One day the history of the woolcombing-machine will probably be written, and some attempt may then be made to apportion to each inventor his proper share of the merit of the invention. Nearly all the men who have helped the machine forward in any marked degree have been associated with Mr. Lister more or less; he has been, as it were, the chief controlling power. Lister, Donisthorpe, Noble, Platt and Collier, Heilmann, Hubner, Holden—these are the names which must always stand forth as representing amongst them the creation of the woolcombing-machine in its perfected form.

Mr. Lister, however, was not content to rest upon his laurels, and to remain satisfied with the ample fortune that his machine had brought him; he had the true inventor's instincts, and no sooner had he solved one mechanical difficulty than he longed for others to attack. Accident showed him a new world that was waiting to be conquered. Going one day into a London warehouse, he came upon a pile of rubbish which strongly attracted his attention.

He had never seen anything like it before. He inquired what it was, and was told that it was silk waste. 'What do you do with it?' he asked. 'Sell it for rubbish, that is all,' was the answer; 'it is impossible to do anything else with it.' Mr. Lister felt it, poked his nose into it, and pulled it about in a manner that astonished the London warehousemen. It was neither agreeable to the feel, the smell, nor the touch; but simply a mass of knotty, dirty, impure stuff, full of bits of stick and dead mulberry-leaves. In the end Mr. Lister made the offer of a halfpenny a pound for the 'rubbish,' and the sale was there and then concluded, the vendor being especially pleased to get rid of it on such advantageous terms.

When Mr. Lister got this 'rubbish' down to Manningham, he spent a good deal of time in analysing and dissecting it, and he came to the conclusion that there was something to be done with it. He now set himself to inquire into the exact position of the silk manufacture at home and abroad, making the fullest possible investigation. The result of this was that he found silk waste was treated all the world over as he had seen it treated in the London warehouse—as 'rubbish.' Mr. Lister now set his heart upon inventing machinery that should be able to manipulate this waste and imperfect product of the silkworm into fabrics that should vie in appearance with materials manufactured from the perfect cocoon. In this venture he was not beset by rivals, as he had been in the days when he strove to conquer the difficulties of the woolcombing-machine; he had taken a thing in hand now in which no one but himself felt the shadow of an interest, and he could work on without being haunted by the

fear of some one stepping in between him and success. He engaged a number of skilled workmen from foreign countries—men well acquainted with the manufacture of silk in all its branches—and although at first they viewed their master's experiments on silk waste with suspicion and distrust, they eventually came to think with him that there was 'something in it.' Mr. Lister now ceased to take the strong interest which he had hitherto done in woolcombing; he allowed the work to fall into other hands and to spread generally over the worsted district, he preserving to himself, however, the full rights and royalties of his patents. For the next ten years he applied himself heart and soul to the solving of the new problem which he had set before him, and early and late he worked at it, getting nearer and nearer to success every day. Few men would have held on as Mr. Lister did to this idea, in spite of commercial panic and weary and prolonged effort. In the crisis of 1857 loss upon loss was sustained by him; but he faced the brunt of the battle and carried himself gallantly through, not only bearing up against all this weight of misfortune, but against the enormously heavy expenditure which he was put to in regard to his silk inventions. There was much secret toil indulged in, in those days, at the Manningham Mills; the outside world knew little of what mighty schemes were there being matured. As before stated, Mr. Lister spent 360,000*l.* in perfecting machinery for the manufacture of silk waste before he ever made a single shilling by it.

By the year 1865 Mr. Lister had accomplished his task; he had subjected silk waste to so many intricate and delicate operations,

that he was able to manufacture from it velvet fabrics of great beauty. Many machines had to be invented—machines on a very gigantic scale—before the preparatory processes could be successfully mastered; and when this had been done, there was the velvet loom to bring into operation. This loom—which is the invention of Mr. Reixach, a Spaniard—gradually grew into a tangible fact, however, and it is considered to be a *magnum opus* as an invention. Mr. Lister bought this patent, and engaged the inventor's son to superintend its carrying out. It was some years after the loom got into Mr. Lister's hands, however, that it was made perfect. A power-loom for weaving velvet had been thought of before, it is true, Heilmann himself having in the early days of his inventive career brought out a loom for weaving two pieces of velvet simultaneously. It is curious to note how the lives of Heilmann and Lister have, in the matter of mechanical invention, run largely in the same groove: in the one case, however, the inventor had a wealth of original ideas, but was wanting in the practical application necessary to insure complete success; in the other case there was not only much real inventive power, but a superabundance of energy and practical knowledge.

From a very remote period the manufacture of silk had been carried on with more or less success, but until Mr. Lister came upon that heap of rubbish in the London warehouse no one had ever been able to do anything with silk waste. From the earliest ages silk had been recognised as the most beautiful material that the eye of man had seen; the poets were never tired of singing its praises; it had a foremost place in all the pageantry and

magnificence of the past; and its associations were those of rank, wealth, and beauty. The Romans of the second century esteemed a pound of silk 'not inferior in value to a pound of gold,' Gibbon tells us; and for centuries this exquisite material was only to be found as an adornment of the rich. Aristotle makes allusion to the silkworm, and Pliny records the fact that silk came from Assyria, and was worked by the Greek women. In those far-back days China and Persia had the monopoly of the raw material; but in the time of Justinian silkworms were brought to Constantinople by two Nestorian monks, and by this means the silk manufacture was introduced to Justinian's subjects. The manufacture subsequently spread into Sicily, Italy, Spain, and France, and James I. made the attempt to acclimatise the silkworm in England; but neither then nor later was it possible to establish it in our humid atmosphere, and to this day we have to rely solely on foreign countries for the supply of the raw product. So, up to the seventeenth century, England only knew silk as it was imported by the mercers who used to congregate in Cheapside. Lydgate's *London Lackpenny* says:

'Then to the Chepe I began me drawn,
Where much people I saw for to stand;
One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn;
Another he taketh me by the hand.'

Evidence is plentifully scattered through our early literature of the extreme favour in which silk was regarded as an article of costume. The much-enduring Grissell of the old ballad, when she married her brutal husband, exchanged her country russet for silk and velvet, and in the first stage of her subsequent debasement

'Her velvet gown
Most patiently she stripped off,
Her kirtle of silk with the same.'

The Lady Greensleeves of the Elizabethan ballad, too, has her

'Smock of silk both fair and white,'
With gold embroidered gorgeously.'

So far back as 1286 silk mantles were worn 'by some noblemen's ladies at a ball at Kenilworth Castle;' and in 1534 the fabric had grown so much in favour, that the clergy began to array themselves in it. Whittington, the nursery hero, was a dealer in silks. Silk was held in the highest regard in England all through the Plantagenet and Tudor periods, and under the rule of the Stuarts something was done in the way of introducing the manufacture of this class of goods into this country. At last, when the Edict of Nantes forced a band of exiles, who had been engaged in the silk manufacture at home, to England, and they took up their abode in Spitalfields, the manufacture of silk was perfected and established there. In course of time the trade came to hold a not unimportant place amongst the national industries. Mechanical invention was brought to its aid, as to all other textile manufactures, and the trade was considered down to 1857 to have made all the advancement that could be expected of it.

It is not a little surprising, therefore, that an entirely new development of the silk trade should have been hit upon by one who had had no connection with that manufacture. And when Mr. Lister came to take this matter in hand, the difficulties in the way of success seemed to all but himself altogether insurmountable. The silk waste which he had set his heart upon converting into attractive fabrics, and which everybody had discarded as worthless since silk had been known, was the most uninviting aggregation of rubbish it was possible to conceive. It consisted of the waste

made from the manufacture of neat silk and pierced cocoons; and, as it came to Mr. Lister, looked like mutilated ropes, dirty flocks, or mucilaginous hemp, and was knotted and sticky and choked with sticks and leaves and dead silkworms. There were many who shook their heads discouragingly when they saw the heaps of dirty stuff which Mr. Lister had gathered round him; they thought the investment a bad one even at so low a price as a halfpenny a pound. It was not one machine simply that Mr. Lister had to invent before he could bring this rough material into subjection; he must invent a whole series of machines, if the thing had to be dealt with at all. So he began at the beginning, and invented machine after machine, and process after process, until the silk waste was in the end transformed into rich and beautiful fabrics. He had discovered a use and created a market for the much-despised rubbish, and from all the corners of the earth it now found its way to the Manningham Mills—from Persia, China, Japan, India, Italy, and elsewhere. Mr. Lister also made extensive arrangements for producing the raw material in its perfect form on an estate of his own; he accordingly purchased an estate of 1000 acres in Assam. It was found, however, that the difficulty of obtaining labour in that part of our Eastern dependency was so great that the idea of producing raw silk there had to be abandoned, and the estate was transformed into a tea plantation, and has been used as such ever since. More recently Mr. Lister has become possessed of extensive estates in the Punjab and Dehra Dun, where the Assamese worm has been introduced with considerable success, and where also the Italian and Japan-

ese worms are being largely cultivated. There are great filatures at one of these places, where it is intended to reel neat silk. The Assamese worm, it may be mentioned, does not feed upon the mulberry-tree, but upon the castor-oil plant, and produces five crops a year, the leaves of the plant remaining fresh all the year round.

It may be interesting at this point to attempt a brief description of the various processes which silk waste undergoes at Manningham Mills. Allusion has already been made to the condition in which the waste arrives at Mr. Lister's works, and the dirty unkempt appearance it has at that stage. To begin with, groups of boys are to be seen in a large room, sitting upon their haunches 'sorting' the waste, freeing it from the bulkier descriptions of impedimenta, and shaking it into more manageable form. From this department it is taken to the wash-house, where it is put into huge tanks, and washed and shaken with astonishing force and vigour. After this experience of soap and water, the fibre is transferred to a drying-room, in which place it lies in limp helplessness until the wet evaporates and it assumes an aspect of comparative cleanliness. It has now to make the acquaintance of Mr. Lister's machinery, being hurried away to the drums and preparers, where it is dragged and twisted and racked in a most terrible way. At each successive stage it becomes cleaner and softer and silkier; for the ponderous drums, belts, pulleys, and teeth it has to encounter are not accustomed to work without making a marked impression. Many of the machines are exceedingly formidable monsters, and grind their teeth and roar in the most terrific manner. The preliminary pro-

cesses are naturally very numerous; but at length the fibre reaches the combing-machines, and emerges from the latter a beautifully soft flossy filament. There is no doubt now as to its being convertible into lovely fabrics. It is altogether impossible to recognise in it the uncouth ill-looking stuff which was lying in heaps in the warehouse just as it came in. After the silk has left the combing-machines, it enters upon a more refined state of existence, passing successively through the hands of drawers, rovers, doublers, spinners, gassers, reelers, wipers, spoolers, and others, until it assumes the more recognisable shapes of warp and weft.

The weaving departments at the Manningham Mills are full of interest. One shed, covering an area of about 7000 yards—the Beamsley Shed—is entirely given up to the weaving of pieces. What an army of operatives one sees assembled here! They are all weaving velvet or plush, and the looms go through their operations with unerring exactitude, the shuttles flying to and fro with great speed. It is here that we see Mr. Lister's wonderful velvet-loom in active operation. Two pieces—one above the other—are woven in the same loom; and a mysterious knife glides across at each motion and effectually separates the twin pieces. There are looms of marvellously intricate formation engaged in weaving velvet ribbons; and others are employed in weaving the coarser kinds of silk into sacking, carpets, machine-cloths, &c. Everything that enters within the gates of Manningham Mills is utilised in some shape or other, a surprising variety of articles being produced in all from silk waste. The following may be enumerated by way of example: silk velvets,

velvets with a silk pile and a cotton back, silk carpets, imitation sealskin, plush, velvet ribbons, corded ribbons, sewing silks, Japanese silks, poplins, silk cleaning-cloths for machinery, bath-towels, floor-cloths, dish-cloths, and so forth. And all these from the once-despised silk waste! Such a revolution in one branch of manufacture was never accomplished before by any one. The consequence has been that silks have been greatly cheapened, and that a material which was regarded as worthless has come to have a value in the market, the price obtained for silk waste being now very greatly in excess of the original price paid by Mr. Lister.

It was no easy matter, at first, to get Mr. Lister's newly-invented silk machinery into proper working order. The 'hands' had to be taught over again. Each weaver cost the firm many pounds sterling before she had mastered the loom she had under her control. Meanwhile, Mr. Lister and a skilful staff of inventors were day by day engaged in perfecting and inventing machinery; and to this day this work of improvement goes on at Manningham Mills, each year seeing a marked advance upon the preceding one. Mr. Lister seems to be for ever on the point of bringing out another improved machine, of which the world will talk when it comes to have passed the Rubicon of the Patent Office.

The sewing-silk department at Manningham Mills is well worth inspecting. There is a very large quantity of the silk spun at these works converted into sewing-silk, and to watch the delicate threads coiling round the bobbins, under the guidance of a number of girls, is to be deeply interested. Thousands of bobbins of silk thread for the sewing-machine are here produced every week, black and

white being the prevailing colours, although there is a good sprinkling of silk threads of warmer and more attractive colours.

In connection with the works there are dye-houses, mechanics' shops, finishing-rooms, &c., all the processes connected with the manufacture of silk being begun and completed on the premises.

It will be well now to say something as to the appearance and extent of the Manningham Mills. The old works, in which Mr. Lister had wrought out so many of his problems, were destroyed by fire on the 25th of February 1871, the model of Mr. Lister's velvet-loom being burnt in the fire, although, fortunately, the drawings were saved. Damage to the extent of 70,000*l.* was done by this fire, and two lives were sacrificed. On the site of the old mills there then arose a new establishment, constructed on a scale of magnitude and with such attention to architectural effect as had never before been seen even in the West Riding of Yorkshire, thickly strewn as the locality was with factories of gigantic proportions. To the old site a large tract of land was added, the entire estate occupied by the new works being not less than eleven acres. The works occupy a commanding position on the hill-side between Manningham and Heaton, and form a conspicuous landmark for many miles round. They comprise sixteen acres of flooring, and the various buildings are of stone, and are bold and massive in appearance. The cornices of the more elevated blocks of buildings are extremely striking, and the projecting portions of the premises are very picturesque in design. There is a frontage of 350 yards to the Heaton-road, and the works extend from that point backward for a distance of 150 yards. The

great portion of the space thus covered is divided into sheds. There is the Beamsley Shed, before mentioned, where the velvet-weaving is carried on; there is the Green Shed, which is largely devoted to the weaving of fancy silks; there is the Lily Shed, which is given up to the operations of combing, doubling, and carding; there is the Blue Shed, where the velvets are finished; and, in addition, there are a number of smaller sheds, where dyers, mechanics, gassers, and what not, perform their several duties. At the south-western corner of this wilderness of sheds rise up the two principal buildings of the works—the mill and the warehouse, each building being six stories in height, and each covering an area of more than 2000 square yards. At the north end of the warehouse, and at the rear of the central shed, stands the chimney, which does duty for the entire establishment. This beacon of commerce is the sturdiest and handsomest chimney that the manufacturing districts of the North possess, and forms a prominent feature for miles round. It is a square structure, 83 yards in height, and absorbed 7000 tons of material in its erection. The tower of St. Mark at Venice would appear to have suggested the idea of the shaft; but the immense double cornice, which gives the crowning solidity to the chimney, shows a boldness of design that is much more imposing than the tapering belfry which surmounts the campanile of the Adriatic. All the buildings are fireproof. In every part of the interior the same massiveness of character prevails as in the external portions. A total horsepower of over 3000 is represented by the steam-engines used to run this stupendous concern, and when

the works are in full operation employment is afforded for about 4000 persons. The fact that one man has been able to establish so vast a business as this, and to adapt it solely to the carrying on of a branch of industry of which he may be really said to be the inventor, is something to marvel at even in an age which is full of great industrial achievements. At the same time that Mr. Lister built the new mills, he planned out a large estate on the western side of the works, and there erected several hundred cottages, which have since been occupied for the most part by people employed by him.

Mr. Lister's latest success in manufactures has been the production of plush goods, of which the world of fashion has recently become so deeply enamoured. During the last two years many thousand pieces of plush, ranging in colour through all the hues of the rainbow, have been made at the Manningham Mills. Indeed, the principal portion of the supply of this class of goods in England has been despatched from Mr. Lister's establishment, although both in Yorkshire and Lancashire several manufacturers have lately entered into rivalry to some extent with Mr. Lister in this branch of industry.

Mr. Lister inherited the family estate at Manningham in 1853, and resided at Manningham Hall, the ancestral mansion, down to the year 1870. There was a park of from fifty to sixty acres attached to the mansion; and in the days when Bradford had no public park, Mr. Lister used to throw his grounds open to the people every Whitsuntide for the celebration of holiday festivities, a small charge of admission being made for the purpose of raising a fund in aid of the charitable institutions of

the town. In this way a considerable annual sum was raised, and the Manningham Park Whitsuntide galas came to be regarded as the chief outdoor attraction of the year, as many as 100,000 people assembling there at one time. When the town became possessed of a park of its own, however—Peel Park—the scene of these yearly rejoicings was transferred from Mr. Lister's grounds to the new pleasure resort, and it seemed as if the park at Manningham was lost to the public for ever. But this was not to be. When Mr. Lister removed from Manningham Hall to Farfield Hall, near Addingham, the ancient residence of the Cunliffe family, he conceived the generous idea of putting it in the power of the town to become possessed of the park on very easy terms. His original idea had been to sell the park, which would have made a charming estate for villa residences, being well timbered and of very picturesque configuration; and with that view he had the property valued, when it was estimated to be worth 103,000*l*. When he came to the determination, however, to offer the park and mansion to the public, he consented to accept 40,000*l*. from the corporation, and this liberal proposal was acceded to; and on the 28th of October 1870, the property was formally transferred, to be held for the use of the public; since which time it has been greatly improved by the laying-out of new roads, the construction of lakes, waterfalls, &c., and is now one of the most popular places of resort in the neighbourhood. In honour of Mr. Lister the park was officially christened Lister Park; and it was in this place that Mr. Lister's statue was appropriately erected, being unveiled on the 15th of May 1875.

As a public man, Mr. Lister cannot be said to have filled a very conspicuous place. All the avenues of public life were open to him when he commenced his career. A man possessed of such family influence as he had, and having no urgent obligation to engage in money-making pursuits, might have earned a public position without much difficulty. But, from first to last, Mr. Lister has been a man of business; his inventions and his manufactures have occupied so large a share of his attention, that he has had little opportunity left for other work. Notwithstanding this, he has been a good and useful citizen, and has evinced a lively interest in several prominent matters. On the formation of a Volunteer corps in Bradford, he was appointed lieutenant-colonel, and held the position for several years. He has been long connected with the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, and that body has often been greatly indebted to him for the

lucid way in which he has laid down the position of things in regard to the working of the Patent Laws, in which, as may be supposed, he is exceedingly well versed. During the last year or two, Mr. Lister has concerned himself considerably with the questions of Free-trade and Reciprocity, having strongly advocated, in public meeting and otherwise, a partial return to the old system of Protection. At the last General Election he was selected, along with Mr. F. S. Powell, to contest the North Division of the West Riding, in the Conservative interest, against the old members, Lord F. Cavendish and Sir Matthew Wilson, but was unsuccessful.

It is as an inventor and promoter of English manufactures that Mr. Lister will be remembered, and the work that he has done in those directions will always preserve his name prominent amongst the industrial annals of the nineteenth century.

CONCERNING PARLOURS.

THE word 'parlour' is a remnant of a bygone state of things. The days are gone past when Sir Charles Grandison made his stately bows in the cedar parlour. 'There are no parlours nowadays, my dear,' said an old lady, whom we may call Mrs. Partington, 'except, I believe, in the public-houses.' We have dining-rooms, drawing-rooms; studios, libraries, smoking-rooms; but the parlour in the ordinary British mansion has almost become a thing of the past. It remains, in a highly-fossilised condition, as a venerable institution prized by the lower middle class. 'Will you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly;' and I always recognise the wretched feelings of that suicidal fly when I am invited into what people call a parlour. Very probably it is only used on state occasions. The family may burrow in some subterranean apartment in the basement. We perceive by a hundred signs that such a parlour is not a living room, but a dead room. It is full of stiffness and angularities, hard chairs and still harder sofas. The region in which the parlour retains any vitality is the agricultural region. In multitudes of farmhouses, and in some vicarages, this kind of apartment is still found. But the British farmer follows hard on the tracks of the squire, and gives up the humbler for the more ambitious nomenclature. It is the better class of labourer and the thriving artisan who are now aiming at the possession of parlours. Among them the parlour is really a happy and an educating influence. So pre-

valent have been peace and plenty of recent years, that in the suburbs of great towns you may pass whole rows of tenements in which you may distinguish pleasant parlours, with flowering plants filling the windows and the sound of pianos clashing all down the row.

Still, in special cases, the name of parlour yet survives, and of these I would say a few words. The parlour or parloir (Lat. *parabolare*; Fr. *paroler, parler*), as the name indicates, is a place wherein to converse. The waiting-room of a club is essentially a parlour; in a less formal, but more real, sense so is the smoking-room. The old lady was perfectly correct in her allusion—which, however, was hardly to be expected of her—to public-houses. It would have been more decent if she had talked about taverns. And what glorious talk there has been in tavern-parlours before now! We think of Ben Jonson at the Mermaid, and Sam Johnson at the Turk's Head. There are still a few wits and scholars who haunt the sanded parlours of hostels about Fleet-street:

'When all his warm heart, sherris-warmed,
Flashed forth in random speeches.'

Such men have felt and said that there is no throne like the easy-chair of a tavern-parlour. Perhaps there are other attractions besides wit and liquor for a tavern-parlour. I know a great firm that advertises for pretty barmaids, and always sends them home at nights in a special conveyance, to be intrusted to the charge of a most respectable matron. I know men who are

members of good clubs, and who yet prefer to leave their higher luxury and comfort to enjoy the greater freedom and raciness of the parlour. I know of one occasion when a dozen men left a party given by a Cabinet Minister to go off to a tavern. In all country towns a parlour of this sort is the principal, or only, club in the place. Most business and professional people find it worth their while to look in for half an hour in the evenings. It is the conclave of a tavern-parlour which is the most powerful influence of a general election.

But let me enter another parlour, respecting whose respectability there can be no manner of doubt or hesitation. Let it be the parlour of a bank. We have all heard, doubtless with appropriate awe, of the parlour of the Bank of England. But nearly every bank has its parlour, where partners and managers sit in ease and state, giving nods where assent insures solvency, or shakes of the head, compared with which Lord Bursleigh's shake was simply fatuous. That fellow is a lucky one who with careless ease can pass beyond the counter and penetrate, in an easy familiar manner, into the very arcana. Here, in the bank-parlour, the City merchants walk in and get their seventy or eighty thousand pounds' worth of bills discounted in the course of a few minutes. But although your balance may be utterly below contempt, if you are a friend of the family, or a man of aristocratic or moneyed connection, you will get a hearty shake of the hand in the bank-parlour. Thackeray, in his *Newcomes*, speaks of the talks, of the interviews, that went on in the bank-parlour of that highly-respectable firm of which Sir Barnes Newcome was the head. Into the bank-parlours go the clerks, to

be bewigged by the heads of the firm if they are unpunctual or have manifested an undue desire for an increase of salary. Some years ago there was a striking picture at the Royal Academy of a clerk summoned into a bank-parlour to give account of forgery or of defalcations. The pale ashen features of the miserable culprit contrast strongly with the severe austere appearance of the justly incensed bankers. The situation is melodramatic enough, but the facts are very real, very possible. I am acquainted with a striking story of such a case. A clerk had defrauded a banking firm of a thousand pounds. The case was as clear as daylight against him. The facts and figures proved it. The man confessed it. The detective was waiting in the next room to take him into custody. There were extenuating circumstances. The case was one of great want and great temptation. Unfortunately want and temptation lie at the root of all such cases. At the very last moment, when the culprit was reduced to the lowest abyss of despair, the principal partner of the bank made up his mind not to prosecute. A process of acute reasoning led him to this resolution. In the first place, a criminal prosecution would not be the least help towards getting him back his money. It would, in fact, annihilate any small chance of getting the least return. Moreover, this enlightened banker argued: 'If I show the public that I am unable to take care of my own money, they will perhaps think that I am unable to take care of theirs. In these ticklish times it is not wise to take the slightest step that will impugn the credit of banks.' And so the unhappy man escaped scot-free from the bank-parlour. He went away, and I trust he sinned

no more. Considering the multitudes of clerks, such interviews in bank-parlours are, indeed, very rare. How different are some Paris bank-parlours compared with those in London! In Paris the inevitable dinginess of business is relieved by garden views of flowers and fountains.

There is a kind of parlour to which I have occasional access, and which I enjoy accordingly. This is a publishers' parlour. It is a kind of reading-room of a very unique sort. There is as much conversation as reading, frequently a good deal more. The publishers are catholic-minded men. Lying about the parlour you see all the new books—not only their own publications, but also those of the brotherhood generally. Here you may see early copies of new books, smelling so deliciously of the printing-press, which I think is the best scent of all, before they have got into the binder's hands, before they have even been sent out to the reviewers. You may perhaps see a printed proof of one of the Laureate's works, which often have been circulated for months among friendly critics before the time of publishing. You may see rare and costly books, such as never get into general circulation, and which are *caviare* to the vulgar. If there should be any literary news stirring, you may hear the news. If there is any literary lion roaring, you may perhaps hear him roar. The publishers' parlour is something like the parlour of the old coffee-houses of Wills and Button. A publishers' house has always its anecdotes, treasures, and traditions. Sometimes we outsiders, under propitious circumstances, are enabled to make the acquaintance in the flesh of author, critic, or editor, who had hitherto been to us *vox et prætereā nihil*.

There is yet another kind of parlour,—the parlour of the monastery or the convent. Readers who are familiar with the history of Port Royal will remember how the youthful Abbess received her parents in the parlour, when she had resolved to make the rule of her abbey a reality, and not make it a mere source of deriving income and of profuse expenditure. These convent-parlours have witnessed many sorrowful scenes, 'the everlasting farewells, the everlasting farewells' of which De Quincey speaks. Henceforth all the sweet charities of life are well-nigh abandoned. There must be no maiden visions of the married lover and of babies on the knee. All intercourse with the outer world is henceforth limited to the *parloir*. Ever and again the parlour is filled with the living loving voices of the outer world. Does the recluse ever go back in fancy to brood over the story of life, and to wonder whether its plan has been well contrived or has been arranged amiss?

I said that the parlour was an old-fashioned institution. Let me go back to old-fashioned days, when it was a familiar institution to me. It was such a parlour as Longfellow would like to describe, which Mrs. Poyser might have inhabited. The diamond-paned casement-window is opened, and through it comes the murmur of those sounds of which Tennyson speaks :

'Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the
lawns,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmurs of innumerable bees.'

By the way, as a bit of Tennysonian criticism, the first of these three lovely lines is absolute nonsense. Who ever heard of ten thousand rivulets hurrying through a lawn or any number of lawns? The place would be immediately

reduced to a swamp or a duck-pond with a single dozen of them. I simply wish to indicate the parlour of an old manor-house, with a garden before the front window, and an orchard by the side ones. There was the *escritoire*, the immemorial *escritoire*, in which the old gentleman used to keep his books and his moneys, holding out thereby immense provocation to people of burglarious minds. So very old were the decorative parts of the room—old portraits, old books, old articles of *virtù*, the old piano, the old, old songs, ballads which would be despised by those who know classical music, but whose simple melodies and simple words then went to our young hearts. Then the rows of books: the old Minerva Press novels, which no one reads now; the first editions of the eighteenth-century poets, which had been brought as fine novelties into the fine parlours. There was a tall closet in the parlour, where unheard-of treasures, marvellous to the childish imagination beyond bank-notes and cheques, were stored away: guava jellies, home-made wines, figured chests of tea, that had come all the way from China, old silver flagons, tall drinking-cups. There was the dear old lady who presided, tall and prim, with a complexion clear and delicate as a girl's. I sometimes wonder where the next generation of grand old ladies is to come from. It was in the parlour that we used to have our select and polite evening parties 'to tea.' The tea came off at the primeval hour of five o'clock. It was a repast fearfully and marvellously made. Every possible home-made delicacy that could exhibit our resources, our ingenuity, and our tastes was exhibited. The pestilential doctrine of 'tea and turn out' was not then invented. At nine o'clock

the old oaken table ought, to speak metaphorically, to have groaned under the good things. The discreet elders in the interim had retired to the kitchen to smoke their churchwardens. Then there were any number of forfeits involving osculation to the *πῶ*. The treat in the old parlour was the happiest reminiscence of the past, and most blissful anticipation of the future.

There is yet another parlour, the commonest of all of which one has to speak. It is the most decided contrast which can be conceived to the parlours of which I have just spoken. This is the parlour of the London lodging-house. In the economy of such a lodging-house there are several stages and gradations to be noted. The swell of the lodging-house is the man who has the drawing-rooms. His bedroom is the second-floor front. The man who has the parlour has the second-floor back. He, too, in the estimation of the landlady, is a swell, but of subordinate character to the drawing-room swell. The more restricted lodging-house would have the parlour lodger's bedroom on the ground-floor, and only folding-doors would divide the drawing-room from its bedroom. It is rather curious to find oneself described, briefly and personally, as a parlour. The 'parlour' has forgotten to take his latchkey, or the 'parlour' has ordered a sole for breakfast. That is all you stand for in the estimation of the landlady. The parlour constitutes the final cause for which you were destined. The 'parlour' is your *raison d'être*. You are for the parlour, and the parlour for you, as glove and hand go together. When once you give up the parlour you drop into the wide sea of humanity, and are distinguishable no more.

I knew a man who took a parlour

for a number of years. He was a man of a good deal of taste, and in the course of a few years turned everything that the landlady had out of the doors and windows. The rickety armchair, with the fugitive castor, went; the other chairs of infirm constitution, very weak in back and legs, were stacked like so much old timber, as, indeed, they were; the greasy old carpet, concerning which a legend prevailed that it had once been an imitation Brussels, suddenly, its constitution being utterly destroyed, gave way in twenty places at once, and was swept out of the room like so much waste-paper by the housemaid. The round table also disappeared. The mystic report prevailed in the neighbourhood that some spirit-rappers had operated on the table, which gave a convulsive dance about the room, and then disappeared in the direction of the attics. I must, however, say that my friend gives a very different version of the ultimate destiny of the table. He has now filled his parlour with good Chippendale furniture, and says that not a single rag or stick belonging to the old woman is to be found in it. But she still makes her weekly appearance, presenting a bill for which the first item is twenty-five shillings for furnished lodgings, accompanied by a long train of extras. Let me only express the hope, my friends, that if I am addressing any one of my fellow-creatures who is a lodger, he will cultivate the conscientious habits which befit his calling: that if he is the last man he will put up the door-chain; that he will not leave any matches on the floor or staircase; that he will confine

the use of the latchkey within reasonable limits; that he will avoid giving unnecessary trouble in his early and late demands; and that he will deal with the overworked servants liberally when he goes away for his holiday, or in company with some sweet creature relinquishes the comforts of bachelorism for a home of his own.

Many are the traditions and recollections that gather round various of the London parlours. It has been suggested that some memorial slab or stone should be placed in houses where celebrated people have lived, and in some cases this has actually been done. This might be done on quite a large scale in the parlours of London lodging-houses. One might speak of the actors and artists, the authors and journalists, the men of wit and fashion and business, who have been well content with the unambitious parlour, having, however, in so many cases the run of clubland and a general entry into society. One case I especially remember. It was that of a young scion of the aristocracy, who, having only slender means from home, first made himself a free-lance in literature, and afterwards a power in politics. Rigorously and wisely economical, he stuck to the parlour of a London lodging-house until his name had become bruited over the world. He is now the favourite guest of palaces, and has palaces of his own. Lastly, Asmodeus, when he took off the roofs and peeped into the houses, might have seen a great deal of the curious and comic phases of life beneath the ceilings of metropolitan parlours.

AMONG THE HEATHER.

A Highland Story.

By A. C. HERTFORD.

CHAPTER XV.

'A good old English gentleman, one of
the olden time.' *Ballad.*
'No love like mother-love ever has shone.'

SHRIEK! went the engine, and the train glided slowly out of the station; one last good-bye, one wave of the hand, and Fanny was lost to view. Norah had begun the long journey home. Ah, how she had been longing for and looking forward to this! and now that it had come, what would she not give that the necessity for it had never arisen! So much had been crowded into the last few hours that thinking had been out of the question; now, as the train rushed on between high mountains, beside streams and rocks, through lovely scenery of every description, she paid no heed to it, but lay back in her corner, with closed eyes, and thoughts far away, standing in imagination beside the bed on which the much-loved little sister lay, and by degrees working herself into a fever of nervous excitement as she thought that this day must pass, and the long night also, ere home could be reached. And O, what might not have happened before then? Trying to change this current of anxious thought, she next lived over again, in imagination, her visit, now among the things of the past, at Robin Lodge. But here another trouble met her. The greater sorrow had for a time made her forget the lesser; but there it

still was, ready to assert itself whenever it got a chance, and if the house seemed dark and dreary to Geoffrey after Norah's departure, I doubt if she felt that dusty railway carriage any brighter a place. Poor girl! her view of life just now was sad enough to please even Miss Duff; but I do not think her present trouble would have been any easier to bear had she failed to take enjoyment out of the happy days which had been sent before the sorrowful. She leant back and tried to think of nothing at all; which, by the way, is one of the most fruitless of attempts. A gruff voice roused her presently, proceeding from an old gentleman at the opposite end of the carriage, its only other occupant.

'I perceive, ma'am, that you do not admire mountain scenery. Now I love it.'

'O yes, I do indeed,' she answered, smiling at his eccentric manner.

'Then why don't you look out? When I was your age I enjoyed nothing better than a journey through parts like these; it was not the railway then, though—nothing so luxurious—but travelling often through mist and rain, on the top of a crowded coach. I wouldn't go to sleep if I were you. You don't know how much you are losing.'

'I was not sleeping, only thinking.'

'Thinking with your eyes shut,

eh! That means only a step across the boundary to dreamland. Young ladies like you have no business to think. Now I wonder what the thoughts were about? I'd lay a good round wager they concerned balls and pretty frocks.'

Norah smiled sadly.

'No, I am afraid my thoughts were very sorrowful ones. I am going home, after a visit to friends, to nurse a little sick sister; and I was thinking of her when you spoke.'

The old gentleman's manner changed instantly.

'Poor child! poor child! don't cry,' he said hurriedly, as the tears rose unbidden to her eyes. 'You know it won't do any good. What's the matter with the little lady?'

'I don't know; I only got a telegram.'

'Hang telegrams!' snarled her companion savagely. 'They are apiece with all these confounded new inventions! Their chief end seems to be frightening honest folk out of their wits with their abruptness! I am a Tory, ma'am; my father was one before me, and my grandfather before him! I like plain old-fashioned customs; but they are all fading fast away one after the other, and I am constantly saying to myself, "My boy, it's time you faded away too; there are new heads rising up to fit the new shoulders." Mary might miss me, though. Ah, well!'

The old man sat lost in thought for a minute or two, gently tapping the floor with his large silver-headed umbrella; and Norah as silently watched him, wondering who Mary was. Presently he roused himself.

'But I have not said what I meant to, ma'am. Depend upon it, you will find your little sister not half as bad as the nasty little piece of pink paper led you to expect. Don't fret, ma'am.'

Norah wished she could honestly believe as he told her; but she was comforted nevertheless by the rough sympathy, and the funny manner kept her thoughts from herself and her troubles.

'Now, ma'am,' continued her companion, 'observe what the march of knowledge does, and you will wonder how any one can wish for improvements. Here we are in this train, for instance; and I don't wish to frighten you, but whenever I set foot in a railway carriage, I say to myself, "Here you are, Dick Lewis, safe and sound *at present*, though you are growing old; but the chances are that some one will have the unpleasant duty forced upon him of picking you out piecemeal somewhere between this and your journey's end." You know, ma'am, in the old coaching-days we never had accidents of any consequence—at least, they were a rarity. Then in these railway journeys you may sit for the best part of a day beside some of your fellow-creatures, your brothers and sisters, ma'am; and ten chances to one you won't address two words to them throughout the entire journey; or if you summon up courage to break the ice, and open a conversation, you get your head almost frozen off by the cold answer. Now on the coach one often made friends for life with the man who sat next you.'

'It must have been very unpleasant if he proved disagreeable,' remarked Norah, amused in spite of herself.

'People were pleasanter in those days, ma'am; more frank and hearty; stood less on their dignity. Just look at servants nowadays too! Why, when I was a boy, and that's an old story now, my dear, they were good, honest, hard-working men and women; could read and write, and keep a

civil tongue in their heads ; once settled in a good family, they were settled there for life, so long as they behaved themselves, at least. Now if you go into any parish school you will find the little monkeys learning more than you probably know yourself ; and pray what good does it do, ma'am ? What good ? that is the question. You certainly get a maid-servant who can play the piano, read French, and do fancy-work ; and a man-servant who knows Latin, oils his hair with your pomatum, draws, and writes poetry to his lady-love. But show me the servant who will keep the house clean and look after his master's interests even when his back is turned, and you will show me a rarity ; a rarity, ma'am, and no mistake !

Norah's eccentric new friend ran on in the same strain, not requiring many answers, only an assent now and then, for to dissent from him would have been worse than useless, till at last, having tired himself out, he dropped peacefully asleep and slumbered on, only waking as the train puffed into Edinburgh station. There was some little time before the night train to London would start, and Norah had promised that she would employ the interval in at least attempting to eat something ; for the lunch she had taken before starting would hardly have satisfied a hungry little bird. The old gentleman was wide enough awake now, and looked after Norah and her luggage in truly fatherly style. He seemed to have taken her under his special protection, and being both bound for London, and both travelling by the same train, proposed that they should make the journey together, and keep each other company. His gruff manner had entirely disappeared

—at least, so it seemed to Norah—and from his keen gray eyes there only shone forth the warmth of his honest old heart. She gladly accepted his offered escort, feeling amused by the friendship which had so suddenly sprung up between them. They enjoyed a comfortable little tea together ; for, spite of anxiety, Norah's long fast made her glad of some food. When everything was ready, and they were once more about to start, her companion tipped the guard, asking if the young lady and he could be allowed a compartment to themselves ; which favour that gentleman granted, adding, 'And if your young lady would care for a foot-warmer, sir, I'll bring one in a minute ; the nights grow chilly now, sir.'

The old gentleman answered gravely, but chuckled as the guard departed. Yet Norah fancied she noticed just the slightest shade of sadness pass over the fine old face, and that there was a touch of regret in the kind voice as he said,

'That man took you for my daughter, my dear, though, by the way, you might better be my granddaughter. Ah, well, if it had pleased God ever to give me a little girl like you, I think I should have loved her very much. But I must content myself with playing father to other people's children now ; that is next best to the real thing ; and I must not grumble because of one blessing withheld when so many have been showered down upon my undeserving old head. Now, my dear, you must let an old man have his way ! I shall make you up a comfortable bed in this corner, and as soon as we start you must go to sleep like a good child, or your heavy eyes will be enough to frighten your little sister when she sees you to-morrow.'

Norah looked up gratefully as

he covered her carefully with her wraps and settled her cushions more comfortably. After he had performed these little services, he composed himself in the opposite corner, and wishing her 'Good-night, my dear; I am going to sleep, and you must follow my good example,' closed his eyes, and in less than five minutes was utterly unconscious of all things.

'Certainly,' thought Norah, 'his terror of accidents does not seem much to destroy his rest.' Soon, tired both in mind and body, she too fell asleep, and had a strange dream.

Once more she was in the Highlands, and Madge, who was very ill, was there too. Not in her little bed, though, but out among the heather on the bleak hillside, where the cruel rain smote down hard and fast, and there was no shelter from the biting stinging wind, and none was near to help save Norah. And she stood up, and strained her eyes, and called for aid; but the wind carried her voice away, and at last, when she opened her mouth to cry, no sound would come. And the rain came down, and the wind blew. In a little time a figure approached, and as it came nearer she saw that it was Percival. And she called out aloud, 'O, help me! Carry home my sister, for she is very ill!' And Percival stooped to raise the child, and, as he did so, the storm became more violent and beat against him, till his arms lost their strength and dropped their burden to the ground. And he tried once again, but it was of no avail. Then he cried, 'Help me, Norah! Let us work together!' And Norah stooped and tried, but each seemed to hinder the other; they could not raise the child. Then Percival gave up in despair, and walked sadly away. And the rain came down, and the wind

blew. After a little time Norah saw another figure come slowly over the mountain-side, and as it came nearer she saw that it was Geoffrey. And she raised her voice, and cried aloud, 'O, help me! Carry home my sister, for she is very ill!' And Geoffrey came quickly, and he said, 'Help me, Norah! Let us work together!' and she answered gladly, 'Yes, Geoffrey, I will!' And as they stooped together, they raised the little child with ease; she seemed no longer heavy, the weight of the burden had been halved, each helped the other in their work. And the rain ceased to fall, and the wind to blow, and through a rift in the cloud the glorious sun burst forth. Then Geoffrey looked up and smiled, and said, 'Norah, why were you so faithless? 'Twas only the sun behind the cloud. Did you not know I would come to you at last? Look up, my child, my love; ever keep looking up!' And Norah *did* look up; and the sun shone forth so brightly that she awoke.

It was only the light of the railway-lamp shining in her eyes, after all. There was no Geoffrey, no Madge, no sun behind the cloud; the train was every moment carrying her farther and farther away from the dear Highland hills, and all seemed dark and sad to poor little Norah Grant. Mr. Richard Lewis slumbered peacefully on. Norah, feeling no longer sleepy, sat up, and tried to make out through the smoky carriage-windows some of the dim objects in the darkness outside. She smiled as she thought of her strange dream; a sad little smile it was, though. 'Would it ever come true? Would Geoffrey and she ever be allowed to share life's many burdens between them? On the whole the dream rather comforted her; might it not have

been sent as a sign to hope on, hope ever? Do not be afraid lest I should be about to weary you with a long account of Norah's thoughts and feelings during this railway journey; suffice it to say that, contrary to the expectations of good old Mr. Lewis, no accident happened, no broken bones had to be picked out of the carriage half-way, but about seven next morning the Flying Scotchman triumphantly entered King's Cross Station, and Norah and her new friend alighted. How gray and grubby every one does look, to be sure, after a long night's journey! And yet how people vary in this respect! Some make a point of getting untidy as soon as they enter a railway-carriage; it is evidently an important part of the journey, in their eyes. Necktie pulled to one side, hat askew, gloves thrown off, and consequently hands dirty. Others, on the contrary, look almost as trim and neat at the end of the journey as at the beginning; a trifle dusty, perhaps, but that they cannot help. Norah belonged to the latter class of travellers; but she looked pale and anxious, and no wonder, poor child; the last few hours had been very trying.

'Now, my dear,' remarked her friend, 'any one sent to fetch you, eh?'

'There is sure to be, I think—yes, there is Neville; I thought mother would send her. Poor woman, she always gets short-sighted at a railway-station;' and Norah hurried off, eager to find the maid and hear tidings of her sister.

Mr. Lewis meanwhile departed to look after their luggage. Returning a few minutes later with Neville, Norah found him seated triumphantly on his large port-manteau, making a footstool of his small one, his voice heard loud

above the din calling for 'a large black trunk with N. G. in red letters, a little black bonnet-box with N. G. in red letters; who will be good enough to bring me those articles with N. G. marked in red letters?'

Good old man, if only he had put on his spectacles he would have seen that those same red-lettered trunks had, in due order, been taken from the van, and were now quietly lying on one side, waiting to be claimed.

Norah hurried up.

'O Mr. Lewis, Neville says my sister is no worse, perhaps a shade better, this morning. I am so thankful!'

'My dear, I congratulate you. I dare not rise from my seat, or there is no knowing what would become of this property of mine; but I congratulate you with my whole heart. I told you how it would be yesterday, only I could see you did not believe the old man. I have had some experience, my dear, and have invariably found those telegrams to be mere sensational disturbances, terrifying one out of one's five senses all for nothing. Now, my dear, how are you going to get home?'

'Neville has found my trunks, I see, and got a cab; so I am ready to start at once, and must wish you good-bye. Thank you so much for all your kind care of me; mother will feel so grateful when she knows; and,' added Norah, somewhat shyly, 'if ever you are near Addison-gardens, and will come to see us, we shall be so happy.'

'I am going very much in that direction at present, my dear; for I mean to part from you only at your own door. Ask your nurse to call for my brougham—Mr. Lewis's brougham; it has a fat piebald horse; and when she has found it you and I will start

for Addison-gardens together. Mistress Neville may ride in the cab and guard your luggage. I never quite trust these London cabmen. You won't mind me seeing you safely home, my dear? You will let an old man please himself?

He was still seated on his property, and Norah looked down on him with grateful eyes.

'Thank you so much,' she said. 'I can't think what makes every one so kind.'

'Perhaps the little girls, who are so nice, have something to do with it, my dear! You need not thank me; I live quite close myself, my sister Mary and I; it is all on my way.'

Norah afterwards learnt that the abode of Mr. Richard Lewis and his sister was a small house not far from Cornwall-gardens. Some persons might have considered his proposed route home a roundabout one. The brougham with the fat piebald horse was soon found, and they started. It is a long drive at the best, that from King's Cross to Kensington, a weary drive, particularly after a long night's journey; but it came to an end at last. There stood the dear familiar house; but, O, how her heart sank as the carriage drove silently up, for there was straw laid down! She mutely pointed to it, with such an anxious look in her eyes that Mr. Lewis wondered if he could be going to have a cold, he felt such a strange choky feeling in his throat. But he answered cheerfully her unspoken question:

'Straw, my dear? And a very sensible arrangement; it is best to have entire quiet, however slight the illness. Why, I have known people lay it down for a bad headache' (the kind old fellow must have had rather hypochondriac friends).

The door was reached. With

one grateful hasty good-bye, Norah jumped out. The old gentleman pulled the check-string, ordered his coachman to drive off, and soon the brougham and the piebald horse had quitted Addison-road.

Only a kind old Christian, dropping a seed of kindness where he could! Only a true-hearted old-fashioned gentleman! He had but lightened a sad journey to one of his fellow-travellers in life, but helped to comfort one lonely little heart. Not great deeds these in the eyes of men, if ever they hear about them at all. A pretty little maiden lady, who is waiting just now in a small house near Cornwall-gardens, and wondering what keeps Dick so long, will, perhaps, be told the cause of his delay, and will gently answer, 'Quite right, dear Dick; it is all in the day's work.'

But I think, when men are judged by their works, there are many like Richard Lewis who will not be forgotten.

The door opened almost before Norah had had time to knock; another moment, and she was in her mother's arms. Mrs. Grant drew her gently into the drawing-room, and kissed and caressed her in a way which told how sorely she had been missed.

'O mother, tell me quickly, how is Madge? Neville tells me it is low fever; mother, why did you not send sooner?' and Norah looked up reproachfully.

'Darling, I telegraphed as soon as we knew there was the least cause for alarm. Madge had been ailing for some little time, but we hoped it was but the effect of London air after the seaside; it was only some few days ago we knew it was low fever; then the doctor trusted it would be a slight attack, and I did not wish

to shorten your visit unnecessarily. But the night before last her mind wandered, and she cried so constantly for you, Norah, that the doctor said I should send for you at once, it was the most likely thing to do her good.'

'Mother, you should have sent sooner; I was, O, so ready to come!'

Mrs. Grant thought she discovered a trace of home-sickness in the voice; but she took no notice of it, only smoothed her daughter's hair, and taking the little face between her hands, imprinted a loving kiss on it, as she said,

'Madge is no worse this morning, love; and after you have had some breakfast, if you think you can keep very quiet and composed, you may go to her. Be cheerful, for she gets tired and fretful at times, poor child.'

Mrs. Grant was a sweet delicate-looking woman, tall and fair. Her little daughter Madge resembled her more in face and figure than did Norah; but she had the latter's soft gray eyes and dark lashes, and something of her expression too when she smiled. A thorough lady and a thorough mother. Everything about the little house spoke of taste and refinement: from the tiny conservatory, filled with bright flowering plants, opening out of the drawing-room, down to the minutest details of the furniture, a lady's hand was visible throughout. Norah did not feel the least hungry; but with her mother seated near, coaxing her to eat, she tried, just to please her. She soon rose, and pushed away her plate.

'Mother, I cannot wait any longer; let me see Madge now.'

Mrs. Grant led the way upstairs, and opened softly the door of the sick-room; then stood back, and whispered,

'You had better go in alone. She knows you are come, and we must not excite her with too many people.'

A quick cry of pleasure from the bed as Norah came forward was the sweetest welcome she could have had; and as she bent down, and two hot little arms were clasped tight round her neck, while a weak little voice said, 'O Norah, you have really come at last! You can't think how I have wanted you!' she felt happier than she had done for some days past, and forgot for a time that other trouble which seemed no nearer a happier termination than before.

That same evening, leaving Madge, who had at last fallen asleep, to the tender care of the faithful old nurse, mother and daughter repaired down-stairs together. Mrs. Grant poked the drawing-room fire into a cheerful blaze, seated herself in a low chair beside it, and putting her arm round Norah's waist, drew her gently down till she knelt beside her.

'And how about your visit, dearie?' she asked. 'I have not heard a word of it yet.'

Norah curled herself up comfortably on the hearth-rug and leant her head back against her mother's knee ere she answered: it did not quite suit her feelings that this conversation should be carried on face to face; then she said,

'I enjoyed my visit, on the whole, very much, mother.'

'As much as last year's, Norah?'

'Well, perhaps not quite so much.'

'I thought not, dear. How was that?'

'I don't know exactly;' and Norah's eyes were steadily fixed on the fire.

Mrs. Grant made no remark on

the subject, though she rather suspected that her daughter could easily have found out the reason had she wished. She also felt sure there was some trouble pressing on her child just now, from the worried look in her eyes; but she had entire confidence in her, and did not press the matter further.

'Who were there besides yourself, dear?' she presently asked.

'O, a funny old aunt of Mr. Ross—such a queer specimen, mother!—an English girl, Miss Tennant; and Mr. Leicester, who was there last year, you know; and,' rather quickly after an instant's pause, 'a Mr. Lindsay.'

Mothers' ears are the quickest, and mothers' eyes the keenest; but any one would have been very blind not to have discovered that under those last words a story lay hid. Mrs. Grant had looked somewhat anxious at the mention of Percival's name; for she had had her fears in that quarter. They soon subsided, however; for though the gray eyes were still fixed on the fire, Norah's colour never changed, and the hand that lay in her mother's never moved. But when Geoffrey's name had been so hurriedly spoken the head had turned just a little further away and the hand had involuntarily trembled. That was all; but these simple actions told a good deal. As Norah had said to herself in the Highlands, when feeling lonely and homesick, 'Mother saw and sympathised.' Unspoken sympathy truly, but comforting nevertheless. Mrs. Grant remembered a time, long ago now, when she had experienced something of these feelings herself; and her heart felt heavy for her daughter's troubles. She asked no further confidence, but, stooping down, kissed her child's forehead,

and whispered low, 'God bless you, my dearest!'

It was growing late, and without another word mother and daughter rose and wished each other good-night. Norah had almost gained her own room, when, turning round, she threw her arms round Mrs. Grant's neck, hugged her close, and whispered, 'There never was a mother like you in the world; it is so sweet to be at home again!'

CHAPTER XVI.

'When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.' SCOTT.

DARK days followed; dark sad days. Madge grew worse; the straw laid down in front of that house in Addison-gardens was many times renewed. Neighbours saw the doctor's carriage stop there oftener and remain longer; and they may also have noticed that, as he left the house, there was frequently a sorrowful pitying look on his kindly face. Good and noble men as doctors mostly are, how much they see of the sad side of life! a side often so utterly mournful that few can ever become callous to it, however familiar constant practice may make them with it. This doctor was an honest Christian, a true gentleman, and a great lover of all his little patients. He had many children of his own at home, who often boasted that never once could they remember him addressing one angry word to them, or making use of one hasty expression. He had been blessed with a sweet unselfish temper, which he carried with him to every sick-room he visited. Was it any wonder that he was universally loved and honoured? Madge looked forward to his visits with eager pleasure, and when, after a

little time, he began to come more frequently—twice, and at last three times, a day—she only felt how good it was of him to spend so much time and trouble on her. Ah, but after a little while she ceased to think at all, and Norah, the never-failing watcher beside her bed, heard only rambling words, snatches of conversation carried on with imaginary persons, low moans of restlessness and pain; often—and this was the hardest to bear—cries for herself, for Norah to come back; why did she stay so very long away? Then when she would come gently up to the bed and stoop over the sufferer, laying her cool hand on the hot brow, it would almost break her heart to see the blue eyes turned up without a trace of recognition in them, only a vacant weary gaze.

So the days went by, Madge growing daily weaker, till to the loving eyes that watched her she seemed only waiting to be carried to the land that is very far off. The Angel of Death was no stranger in the family—he had visited it many times before; they knew his stern face well, and dared not deceive themselves. But beside that little sick-bed mother and sister were not the only watchers. It seemed so hard to believe that another Form was also there, looking with loving pitying eyes on the sorrow. He had Himself sent, which He was waiting to help them to bear, and which was to work together for their good, because they loved God. They did remember Him, though, and fervent agonised prayers went up from mother and sister that the Good Shepherd would leave them this lamb just a little longer, or, if this must not be, carry it safely away in His loving arms to the home where pain and sorrow, tears and sighing, never pass the door.

Many, many times was this prayer renewed; at last, as the beloved little child grew worse, when the good doctor, daily meeting the mother's anxious gaze and reading the unspoken question, 'How is she?' had each time to answer more sadly, 'No better,' they no longer hoped for an answer to the first part of their prayer, but only begged that the restless pain might be shortened, and that little Madge might soon be 'where the weary are at rest.'

So when their faith and trust had been sorely tried, when they had stood the test, when they were most ready to give up their darling that her sufferings might be shortened, she was restored to them. One evening, when the doctor paid his customary visit, and Norah asked him, 'Tell me, is there *any* hope?' he gave that answer which has so many times been sadly uttered, 'My dear, while there is life there is hope; her case lies in higher hands than ours; we must leave it there: man can do little more.' Then, instead of, as usual, softly leaving the house, saying he would return the first thing in the morning, he offered to remain and watch with them. A change must soon take place, and he might be wanted.

Just when all was at its darkest, when there seemed no ray of hope remaining, when they could only sit and watch for the end, the fever turned, Madge opened her eyes, and the doctor, hastily going to her, felt her skin, her pulse; and the kind voice, which had remained steady through the hours of terrible anxiety, now trembled, as he turned to the mother and said,

'She will do now. God has truly worked a miracle to save her.'

And when Mrs. Grant, hardly daring to believe that what he

said was true, came softly to the bedside and looked on the beloved little face, she no longer met a blank unconscious gaze, but Madge tried to hold out two weak arms, looked up lovingly, and, with a contented murmur of 'Mother' and 'Norah,' turned on her side and dropped into a peaceful slumber. It had indeed been darkest before the dawn; but light had come at last, and the sad night was now among the things of the past.

Gradually Madge began to mend; very, very slowly, for the long illness seemed hardly to have left her strength to recover. Little by little she grew stronger, till at last the doctor said he hoped she was out of the wood now, and they must take great care she did not return to it. The most wearisome part of the illness began now, when, tired out and restless, poor Madge grew at times fretful and impatient; when all things failed to amuse her; when she longed for a change from the sick-room she had been confined to so long. Now did Norah's love shine out true and strong. She never complained when impatient words were wrung from the usually patient little invalid, but would sit for hours reading to her, singing to her, telling her stories, concocting dainties to tempt the capricious appetite, feeling she could never do enough for the sister who had been so mercifully restored to her. And she was rewarded a hundred-fold; for the wan face would light up with pleasure when Norah entered the room, and the grateful, 'It feels so nice to have you here,' was the greatest recompense she could have had.

Now that the necessity for exertion had passed, Mrs. Grant's overtried strength gave in, and, though not dangerously ill, she

became so weak and nervous that the doctor forbade her entering the sick-room, except on rare occasions; so Norah had now two invalids on her hands. She did almost everything for Madge; and faithful old nurse hovered between the two rooms, doing all that was necessary for her mistress, but keeping careful watch over her cherished young charge.

Norah had not been without tender sympathy during these trying times. Kind friends had written loving letters from all parts, and many were the sad accounts she had had to send off during the last few weeks. Friends in London had been unfailing in their inquiries, and one day Norah had been astonished to see a brougham draw up at their door, with a piebald horse she remembered well, for it was the same that had brought her home from King's Cross Station three weeks ago. Three weeks? It seemed more like three years! There had alighted, not an old gentleman, but a neat little middle-aged lady, who sent up a card bearing the name of 'Miss Mary Lewis,' and Norah thought she had never seen a sweeter face than the owner of that card possessed. Such a calm, peaceful, childlike face, that Norah's heart had gone out to her visitor at once. Many times afterwards the same brougham stopped at the door and the same little figure descended, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by her brother; and once, when Madge was getting better, by a Skye terrier named 'Fanny,' who politely went up-stairs and paid the patient an afternoon call. Usually Miss Mary Lewis brought a small covered basket in her hand, from which some dainty was produced 'for your little sister up-stairs, with my love;' sometimes jelly, temptingly clear and deli-

cate-looking; sometimes delicious fruit, or sweet flowers; till Madge learnt to look forward to her unknown friend's visit with pleasure, and longed for the time when she might see and thank her for herself.

Norah had had one or two long letters from Fanny, full of loving sympathy and kind messages. Some of these she had shown her mother, some she had not. In her last letter, Fanny mentioned Geoffrey's having quitted Robin Lodge and returned to London. 'Perhaps some day you may come across him,' continued the letter; 'his home in Porchester-terrace is not far from yours. I fancy he seemed to think our poor little windows let in less light after a certain young lady departed!' Involuntarily, as she read this, Norah started, and Madge, who was lazily lying in bed, contentedly eating her breakfast, said,

'What is the matter, Norah? Did anything hurt you?'

'No, nothing, dear;' and Norah kept her face carefully away till the tell-tale colour had subsided; then, slipping the letter into her pocket, she came across to Madge, and began chatting to her in her usual bright way.

'Stoop down,' commanded the small invalid; and Norah obeying, she clasped both arms tight round her neck, hugged her close, and said, 'Then if nothing hurt you, why did you start like that? You mustn't do it again, or I shall think you are getting ill too; and, if you grow ill from nursing me, I think I shall die.'

Norah laughingly rallied her for her silly fancies, and the subject dropped. But when alone, some hours later, in her own room, she locked the door, and once more drawing the letter from her pocket, read a certain part of it carefully over again. Could she, dare she, believe what Fanny

wrote? Was there any chance of that strange dream coming true? Did Geoffrey really care whether she were absent or present? O, if what Fanny told her was not strictly true, it was cruel to have awakened fresh hopes in her breast! Lately, Norah's thoughts had been so much occupied with other things that she had had no time to ponder on her own private worries; and just as she was beginning to hope that she might in a measure forget them, this letter arrived to uncover the old wounds and make them ache afresh. She was weaker than she used to be, and now, as she felt the need of a strong heart to lean on, Geoffrey arose to her remembrance. She recalled him, with Teddy in his arms, that night of the dance; he had never looked more manly than when gently soothing the little fellow's fears; and again at the keeper's cottage on the hill, when such tender pity had looked down on the poor suffering baby. Norah knew she could trust him without one moment's hesitation with herself and all whom she loved. She smiled as she thought how unlikely it was that she and Geoffrey should ever meet by chance in London, this great crowded London, where you might live for years beside your next-door neighbour and hardly know his name at the end. But the smile very soon gave place to tears, Norah being at present rather like an April day, when showers are sadly ready to fall; and as her thoughts went back to the Highlands and the 'days that are no more,' she leaned her head on the pillow and indulged in a good cry. She felt better after it; and bathing her face and smoothing her hair, she repaired to her mother's room, where she was resting on the sofa, to ask her how she felt.

Mrs. Grant's quick eyes soon noticed traces of trouble on her daughter's face; but she only kissed her warmly, as Norah beat up her cushions and made her more comfortable, and said, 'I am afraid your duties of sick-nurse to us both have been rather too much for you, dear: you look pale and worn; you must begin to take regular exercise again, and get back some of the Highland roses to your cheeks!' And Norah answered cheerfully, scolding herself for having been discontented when so many blessings had been given to her. She was a brave girl after all, this Norah Grant!

CHAPTER XVII.

'Patience is sorrow's salve.' CHURCHILL.
'He is truly valiant that can wisely suffer.'
SHAKESPEARE.

WILL you come with me to a house in Porchester-terrace; never mind the number; the same people don't live there now, and the house has been so altered you would not know it again. I want to show you Geoffrey's home, and introduce you to Geoffrey's mother.

Only two members in this family: 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' How many a tale lies hid under these often-quoted words! and Geoffrey had not always been an only son.

On the morning on which I have chosen to introduce you to this particular house in Porchester-terrace, mother and son were seated at breakfast—the only occupants of the room, unless we except a beautiful collie-dog, demurely seated beside her master, not begging, but watching with her soft brown eyes every morsel he put into his mouth. They were seated at either end of the table;

Mrs. Lindsay occupied with her duties as tea-maker; and he dividing his attention between his mother, his breakfast, his newspaper, and his dog. There was very little resemblance between Geoffrey and his mother. She was a little lady, looking older than her years, for she could not have been more than sixty; yet her hair was nearly white, and it accorded well with some of the deepest lines on her face. A slight little lady, with a sweet gentle face, and a figure that might almost have belonged to a young girl, it was so erect and graceful. She invariably wore black satin relieved by pretty lace frills and ruffles, and soft delicate caps to correspond. It was long since she had abandoned her widow's-cap. The husband, still so faithfully but quietly mourned, was ever present in her thoughts, and it did not require this outward token of sorrow to keep his honoured memory fresh. Geoffrey was everything to his mother, his mother everything to him. His manner with young children was enough to tell one what it would be with old age; the two generally go hand-in-hand, and the man who considers it beneath him to be courteous to little girls is never truly chivalrous to women, old or young. Norah had often privately wished she could see Geoffrey and his mother together; he had frequently spoken of her, and many were the letters she had seen addressed to 'Mrs. Lindsay, No. — Porchester-terrace, Bayswater, W.'

As his mother handed Geoffrey his cup, she remarked, looking proudly at the handsome face opposite her, 'Geoff, how is it you have told me so little about your visit this year? Generally you have so much to say on your return; and Lassie and I have

heard nothing as yet; we are quite curious to know more.'

'Lassie must restrain her curiosity, I am afraid. It is a fault I really cannot encourage in her,' and Geoffrey caressingly patted the glossy head. 'You, mother, shall hear all in good time; but I am afraid my answer must sound rather a paradox at first. In some respects I never was so happy, in others I never remember spending such an utterly miserable time; but of one thing I am certain—I never was so glad to get home. Some other time we will talk the matter over, but not just now, I think. Thank Heaven, I have been blessed with a mother who never nags her only son!' and Geoffrey stooped down to kiss the sweet little lady, with something of the protecting manner he would have adopted towards a child.

'What are you going to do this morning, mother? Walk, work, or drive? I stand very much in need of some new silk socks, if you feel inclined to knit. I suppose my studio is in rather a muddle, after its master's long absence! Lassie and I will betake ourselves there, and begin to work in earnest. I have a number of sketches of beautiful scenes you would like to see, mother; will you come by and by and inspect them, or shall I bring them to you?'

'I will come; I shall love to see the places my boy has visited; and remember, Geoff, I am ready at any time to hear about the other matter. There are many paradoxes in life, which only patience can unravel; we must wait.'

'Hard work, though, mother, that patient waiting, especially when it seems that it can do no good. But we will talk over the matter some other time, if you are willing;' and Geoffrey whistled to his dog and departed.

It was very pretty, this home of Geoffrey Lindsay's. Money had evidently not been spared in the furnishing, yet there was an entire absence of any ostentatious display: all was in perfect taste, and the most artistic eye could not have found anything wherewith to be disturbed. The few pictures on the walls were well chosen, there was a restful feeling in the colouring of the whole room; no affecting this particular style or that: everything accorded well together, and spoke of a refined taste. Geoffrey proceeded to his studio, and here a woman's hand was visible. In the arrangement of the dining and drawing rooms, the son's taste seemed to have guided the mother's; but here, the case had just been reversed. A lady's hand had been at work, from the beautiful stand of growing flowers, no servant ever touched, to the many graceful articles scattered about the place. There was a special chair for Mrs. Lindsay, and many were the times she made use of it: this, her son had provided. Lovers they were, this mother and her son, in the truest sense of the word.

Geoffrey began to unpack a large case of unfinished pictures, which had arrived with him some few days previously; and as he continued his work, he glanced, now with a smile, now with a sigh, at each sketch as it appeared. Presently he came across a little picture—perhaps the smallest in his collection—which he handled tenderly, almost reverently. A very simple picture: only a young girl's head, with soft gray eyes, and rough curly hair (alas for Miss Duff's advice!)—that was all. It was only the duplicate to a portion of a picture Geoffrey had painted during that happy miserable visit of his.

Lassie thought her master must

have gone to sleep, he remained so long on his knees before it; so she came round to investigate the matter for herself, placed her head lovingly on his shoulder, and proceeded to examine the picture with him, giving an affectionate lick as she did so. Geoffrey looked up, reminded by the touch that he had a good morning's work before him; he patted Lassie on her handsome back, and observed half-comically, half-pathetically, 'Lassie, my lady, be thankful you have never been in love!' Then, sitting down and calling her to him, he continued, as she placed her two front paws on his knees, and looked intelligently into his face, 'How would you welcome a young mistress, Lassie, supposing you ever got one?' and as the dog wagged her bushy tail in answer, and bestowed another affectionate lick on him, he took it to mean she would politely receive such an addition. He patted her approvingly, and then, motioning her to a seat near himself, set to work in earnest. He soon disposed of his many sketches, some on easels, some in portfolios; but the portrait of the girl with the soft gray eyes was laid carefully away in the drawer of a cabinet. Even after he had deposited it there, and shut and locked the drawer, he opened it more than once again, and gazed at the sweet face looking up at him. Presently, with a determined air, he locked the drawer, and said sharply to Lassie, 'Now, no more of this foolish idling, my lady; you and I must set to work and make up for lost time. Ay, lost, indeed, I fear,' he added, somewhat sadly; and the dear wise dog wagged her tail, and seated herself close to his easel, as if to say, 'Cheer up, master! Whatever happens, remember you always have *me*; I will never

desert you, dear master!' At least, that is what Geoffrey read in his dog's loving eyes; he patted her once more, told her she was a good friend, and some day he would paint her portrait. Geoffrey sometimes held quite long conversations with his favourite; it was perhaps just as well that his studio was built out from the house and they could not be overheard, else he might have been taken for one slightly demented. But I think any one who has ever possessed a loving faithful dog can understand the pleasure there is in talking to it. If you feel depressed, out of sorts, or worried about something, no need to explain particulars to the intelligent creature: the tone of your voice is enough; he feels for you at once and sympathises to the best of his doggy abilities; or if you are in a particularly gay state of mind, how quickly the dear animal finds it out and enters into your joy, bounding round you, barking cheerfully to show that your happiness makes his! If all our clever fellow-creatures were as ready with their sympathy as are these dumb friends, how doubly our joys would be increased, and how lightened would our troubles be! If any one chances to read these lines who is not a dog-lover, I am sorry; but he could have missed the passage, had he so chosen, and I am only too thankful to be able to pay my small tribute of affection to many dear doggies, some of whom have passed quietly away, and some of whom still live, adding much to the happiness of the homes of which they form some of the most respected members.

One old pet, particularly, rises before my memory as I write. I should like every one to know her name, she has brought nothing but honour on it; but she

might not like to be made public, as she is, by nature, very modest and retiring. Suffice it to say that eleven happy years have passed over her head since she arrived at her present home, a little curly puppy of three months old; and the love that she inspires only grows deeper, as one year after another passes over her respectable fat back; and I know well that, when at last she departs this life, there will be tears shed for her—bitter tears—as for a friend who is no more.

Geoffrey had been dabbling away for some time, rather lazily, if the truth be confessed, for after his long holiday he did not feel much inclined to settle down to work, when a knock came at the door, and his mother's face appeared in the doorway.

'Shall I look at the sketches now, Geoff?'

'Come in, mother, they are all ready for your inspection,' and Geoffrey wheeled up the armchair, placing it at a convenient distance from the easel; then he began to exhibit his productions.

'First, mother, this is the house, not that Jack built, but Robin Lodge. I took this soon after my arrival—only a rough sketch, you see; but I like to have it as a remembrance.'

'Of your miserable visit, Geoff?'

'No, mother; the happy part of it.'

'Now, which was your room, my son?'

'This little one; you can just see the window round the corner.'

Mrs. Lindsay gazed at the sketch with renewed interest.

'Here is one taken from the side of the lake, with Ben Wyvis in the distance,' and Geoffrey exhibited the picture, over which he and Norah had become acquainted. He seemed loth to place this sketch aside, and lingered some

time over it, discussing its beauties in all their bearings. When all had been examined and duly admired by Mrs. Lindsay (who would have seen beauty in the veriest daub, provided only her son had painted it), Geoffrey seated himself beside his mother, and, stroking Lassie's glossy head, began: 'Mother, you remember I spoke to you about a certain troublesome matter at breakfast this morning, and we settled to discuss it in detail at some future time. Well, I have been thinking it over, and now, if you have nothing better to do, shall we have a little talk about it—you and Lassie and I?'

'Go on, my dear, I am ready,' but Mrs. Lindsay looked a trifle anxious.

Geoffrey waited a moment, still gently stroking the dog's head; then, glancing up, he caught his mother's eye, fixed affectionately and inquiringly upon him.

'The truth is, mother,' he said, 'I don't quite know where to begin my story; but perhaps, as it is illustrated, I had better show you the frontispiece.'

'Dear Geoff, speak plainly; I don't quite understand you, my boy.'

'I was speaking as plainly as I could, as you will understand when I show you the frontispiece. I have it here. The story, you see, is not published yet, but the picture I cut out; and now, you and I will look at it together,' and Geoffrey moved to his cabinet, drew out the portrait already mentioned, and, without another word, handed it to his mother. She smiled as she took it, and observed,

'Ah, Geoff, I thought there must be some reason like this for the paradox; it ceases to be one now! This is a sweet face; who is it, dear?'

'It is the portrait of the only lady I have ever seen whom I should like to ask you to receive as a daughter; mother, if one day I can present her to you as such, my greatest wish, nay, my most earnest prayer, will have been granted! So much for the happy side of the paradox; but the sad part is, that I can see no chance of this conclusion being arrived at,' and beginning at the beginning, Geoffrey related the story of his hopes and fears (alas, the latter predominated). He did not betray Percival's tiresome confidences—only told her what he had himself witnessed in the conservatory, told her what Miss Duff had related to him; and then, looking up, said quietly, but rather bitterly, 'Now, mother, do your duty, and tell your son how foolish it is that, with all these facts staring him in the face, he cannot make up his mind to believe that there can be no hope for him.'

'I should be sorry to tell you anything of the kind, dear boy. *Nil desperandum* has always been a favourite motto of mine. Only I cannot quite understand the different facts of your story. They do not seem to agree with your frontispiece in any way. Forgive me, my boy; but surely, either the artist has idealised too much, or you are mistaken in some of your surmises.'

Geoffrey's colour rose, as he said quickly,

'Mother, if you only knew how far short that picture comes of the original; if you only knew what she is in reality—in character, I mean—there was no need of flattery to make this lovely!'

'I do not doubt it; far be it from me to disparage in any way this young lady. I know perfectly that any girl whom my boy could choose I would gladly welcome as

a dear daughter. But I feel convinced that in some way you are mistaken about this; no girl, such as you have described Miss Grant to be, would care two straws for such a man as Mr. Leicester. If I had been you, I would not have laid so much stress on what this foolish Miss Duff told you. You know we ladies get sadly gossippy sometimes, and who can tell all the evil that is done by the foolish talking of silly old women?'

'Oblige me by not classing yourself among them, mother mine,' said Geoffrey, smiling. 'I would as soon expect to see you fly as turn gossip. No, I would not implicitly have believed what Miss Duff told me, had it not been that I thought I could myself corroborate her information.'

Mrs. Lindsay was silent for a minute, then she remarked somewhat timidly,

'Then, Geoff, do you think you have any right to this picture? Will it do you any good having it constantly by you? Will it not stir up memories which were better left undisturbed?'

'Mother,' said Geoffrey, with some warmth, 'I *could* not part with this now! I *could* not do it. Where can be the harm? No eyes but yours and mine will ever see it, and Lassie's,' he added, smiling a little; 'but I can trust her, she is as safe a confidante as you are. No, mother, whatever happens, I must keep my picture.'

'Keep it, then, my boy, and may your present trouble end happily!'

'Thanks; at present I confess that seems little likely; but I will try to make your favourite motto mine. And, mother, if you don't mind, we won't talk of this again, at least for some time; let us bury the subject between us now, and carefully cover it up. Perhaps

when I am quite an old man we will dig it up again.'

'I fear some one else will have to assist in the operation if you wait till then, dear. Lassie and I will both be gathered to our rest; but I can't help hoping that long before then everything may have come to a happy conclusion. It shall be as you say, though, and we will not talk about this again till you choose. I am thankful for a son who is not ashamed to make a confidante of his mother; and the old lady laid down the picture she had throughout the conversation held in her hand, as tenderly as Geoffrey could have done, and quietly quitted the room.

Later on that morning, master and dog started, as was their custom, for a midday walk together. Now on ordinary occasions, when they arrived at the Bayswater-road, they turned towards the Park, where they usually took their morning exercise. Lassie, who was careering along some way in front to-day, turned to the left, and set off at a good round pace towards her favourite Park. She was a worldly-minded dog was Lassie, and felt much aggrieved if she did not regularly go through this routine. She liked to see how things were going on abroad, and if there were any change in the fashion in which dogs from Mayfair carried their tails. But this morning master and dog held different opinions; each was equally determined. Lassie was whistled to, called by name, scolded, coaxed, all to no purpose; she evidently considered that her master held entirely mistaken views which she would in no way countenance. Why, any one who knew anything of fashionable life attended the Park at this time: how could he turn his

back on that delicious soft grass, which seemed made expressly to be rolled on? She had often, in dog-language, tried to induce her master to indulge in this delightful pastime, but to no purpose—he never would be persuaded. No, Lassie was firm; and at last, waxing wroth as he discovered that he was becoming a laughing-stock to a group of street children, Geoffrey marched back in much ire to his tiresome retainer, produced a thick chain, and, attached to this, poor Lassie was ignominiously led in the detested direction. On they went, and, even to stretch a point, the walk from Porchester-terrace to Addison-gardens cannot be called pleasant. But Geoffrey appeared wholly unconscious of the surrounding scenery; he stalked along, and though usually a well-mannered man, certainly scanned far too closely, for the laws of politeness, the face of every young girl he passed.

Once Lassie thought her master meditated strangling her in return for her disobedience, for he suddenly quickened his pace, and the poor dog was dragged unmercifully after him, without being able to account in any way for his eccentric behaviour. There was nothing she could discover to warrant such conduct; no handsome dogs on the path, not even a temptingly frightened cat! Certainly, some two or three hundred yards in front she could discern the figure of a girl walking with quick springy steps in the same direction as they were going; but what on earth could their business be with her? Yet evidently she was in some way the cause of their increased pace, for as they overtook her, Lassie, glancing up in her master's face, saw an expression of disappointment pass over it, and her loving heart felt sorry for

him. Evidently, she reasoned, he must have taken the young lady for some one else.

They wandered on till they had reached and passed Addison-gardens; then Geoffrey silently turned, released Lassie, and they slowly retraced their steps.

The dog soon knew this particular part of the world well, for almost every day they took this same walk together, and still Lassie failed to find a reason for so doing; but being of a philosophical turn of mind she soon determined that if this daily routine must be gone through,

senseless though it appeared, she might just as well submit with a good grace.

Poor Geoffrey! he did not enjoy these walks any more than his dog, though for different reasons. Like Lassie, he saw no beauty in this part of London; the Park was far more to his taste, and he often returned home looking tired and disappointed. Strange that he should still so persistently continue doing what gave him after all no satisfaction! O ye sympathetic friends, pity the sorrows of a sworn bachelor when he has begun to change his mind!

(To be continued.)

THE GRACES.

A Valentine.

WHEN the faiths of the world were without a doubt,
And the loves of the world were true ;
When the fires of the gods were not yet stamped out,
And the troubles of men were few,

Three goddesses walked by a shady stream,
'Neath the glowing skies of Greece,
Who were sprung from the father of gods supreme,
And were Majesty, Joy, and Peace.

And the men of those days, who their presence felt,
Had named them the Graces three ;
And worshipped their smiles, at their altars knelt,
And sought for them steadfastly.

Ah, those were the days when a clear blue sky
Smiled down on a joyful earth,
Whose daughters and sons raised to heaven their cry
Of unfettered unfeigned mirth.

But though the sun has as warm a ray,
And the rivers as calmly flow ;
Though the sea of to-day sings as sweet a lay,
And the flowers as brightly blow,

The faiths of to-day are no longer warm,
And the thoughts of to-day not calm ;
The hymns of to-day can no longer charm,
And our troubles can find no balm.

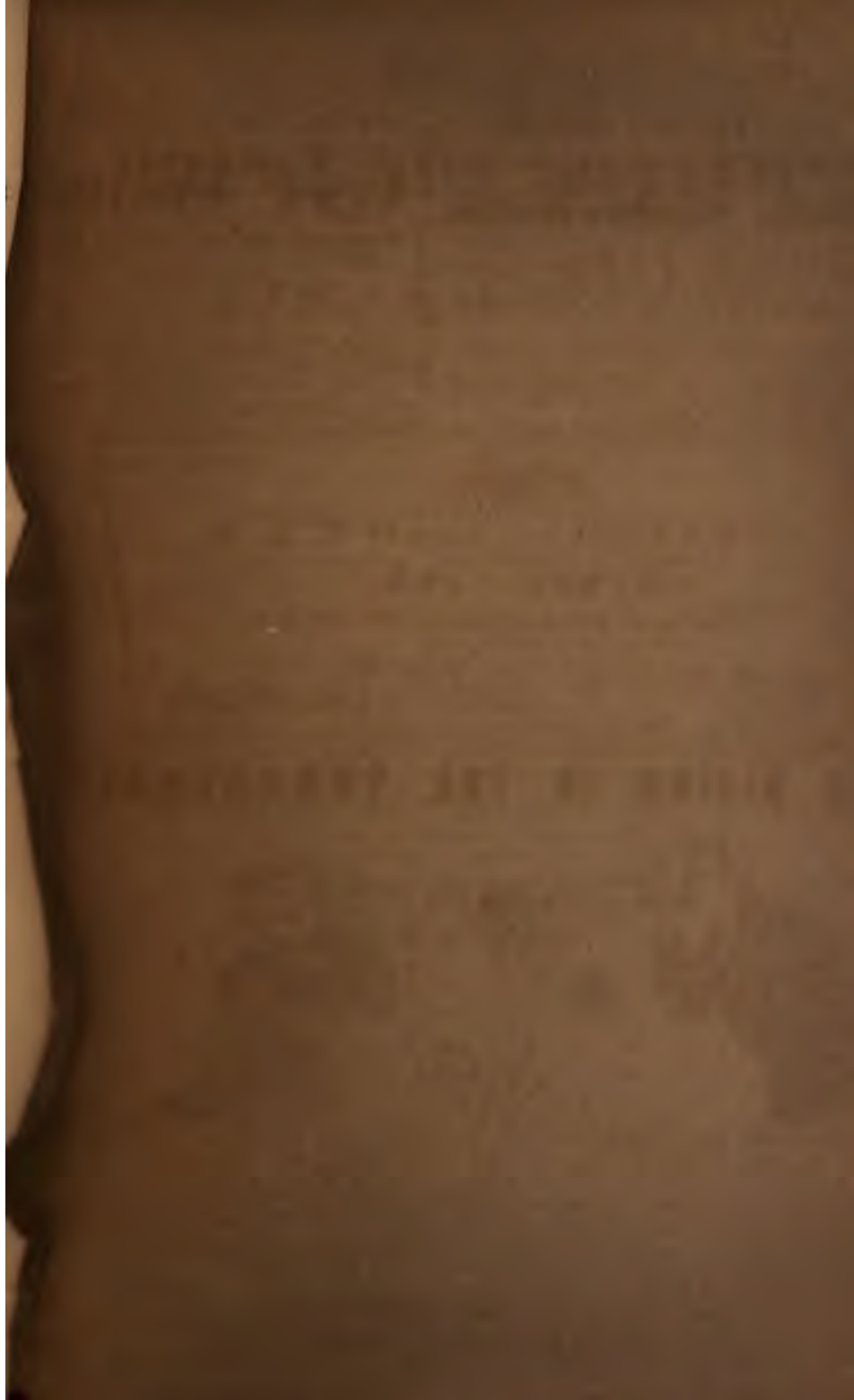
In these days of sorrow and hopeless graves,
When the winds of Time have called
On the ocean of Life fierce angry waves,
Man bows his head appalled.

Where now can we look for the forms of peace
Which our fathers worshipped of old ?
Must the hope which they held for ever cease ?
Are the loves of the world all cold ?

No : surely these maids of the past are here,
They are walking the world again ;
Their eyes as of yore shine kindly and clear,
And they hate as of yore our pain.

Majestic Ethel, and Gertrude's mirth,
And the peace of Hilda's smile,
Have recalled to a doubting sorrowing earth
The pleasures it lost for a while.

And although our song must unworthy be
Of these Graces who haunt us to-day,
Yet the poets of Greece sang less truthfully,
And we worship as fondly as they.





THE EARL'S DOOM:
A LEGEND OF ST. NECTAN'S ISLE.

LONDON SOCIETY.

MARCH 1881.

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. McCULLAGH IS GENEROUS.

IT was with the gloomiest forebodings that Robert McCullagh proceeded, on the morning after Mr. Pousnett's dinner-party, to obey his father's behest. He felt quite sure the interview would prove of no pleasant description, for it never occurred to him—knowing he had got as good as his marching orders—that any one could be ignorant of the fact. Whereas, in truth, the idea that his son was politely dismissed had not crossed Mr. McCullagh's mind. He could not have done such a thing himself: not a man, for instance, to partake of toddy, and seize an opportunity after the last half tumbler to announce his intention of making his bankrupt.

He was a hard man, a stern auditor, a trader who wanted his best pound of flesh, and would have it whenever possible; but he had fine instincts nevertheless, and would not have done an inhospitable or an unneighbourly act for any consideration. His best friend could not have called him a gentleman; but his worst enemy must have admitted he had in many respects gentlemanlike feelings and ideas. He often

expressed the opinion that it was 'aye best to keep business and pleasure apart,' and carried his theory into practice even to the extent of disliking to 'trade regularly with his familiars.' Who that has ever been seduced into friendly relations with the heads of a wholesale house from whom he purchased his stockings, or the customer to whom he subsequently retailed those stockings over the counter, but must confirm the truth of Mr. McCullagh's dictum?

The younger Robert need not, as he wended his way to Basinghall-street, have vexed his soul with speculations concerning what his father would say on the subject of his notice to quit. It never entered into Mr. McCullagh's mind to imagine he had received it: that interview in the conservatory he concluded related solely to his own refusal of the seven thousand pounds.

'Seven thousand pounds, indeed!' mused the canny Scot. 'My faith, even if he had seven thousand pounds, the lad is better out of that hotbed of extravagance.'

The morning was blustering; after the previous night's rain the wind had risen and was hurrying up and down streets, and swooping around corners, and playing at hide-and-seek both with its

own currents and passers-by, at the angles of unexpected City churches, and in all places where open spaces or railings enabled it to have games in the least frequented thoroughfares.

Greeting his son, Mr. McCullagh pronounced the day 'fresh,' and said there was a pleasant change in the weather; which fact his face certainly seemed to indorse, for it looked bright and sunshiny, and as if its owner had been taking a country walk before breakfast. He was standing on the doorstep, evidently watching for his son, as Robert turned into the paved courtyard; and though he did not express any joy at sight of his firstborn, the look of satisfaction upon his countenance when the young man loomed in view was unmistakable.

'Come in, come in,' he said hospitably, flinging wide the door of that apartment where Robert had, eight days before, experienced *peine forte et dure*. 'Take a seat. Are ye cold?' and Mr. McCullagh actually stirred up a fire large enough to bear stirring. 'Ye don't look well, Robert. What ails, ye man?'

'There's nothing ailing me, thank you,' answered Robert; 'but I don't feel very well. I took too much of Mr. Pousnett's wine, perhaps, last night.'

'It's no that,' said Mr. McCullagh. 'As ye are aware, I don't hold with wine, thinking it a poor liquor, only fit for weemen and foreigners; but good wine can hurt no man, and that wine we had last night was just what a fault could not be found with. Ye're too anxious, Robert. When all's said and done, that's about the truth of it,' and Mr. McCullagh paused, and regarded his son attentively.

'Well, I need not be anxious now, at all events,' answered the

young man, with a bitterness of feeling he was at no pains to conceal. 'It is over and done with.'

'As regards the pairtnership, we may conseeder the matter settled,' agreed Mr. McCullagh. 'It was nonsensical, and I may say an unfit thing to make such a proposition to a person in your position; but big people like Mr. Pousnett take no thought for anybody except themselves.'

After his experience of the previous evening, Robert felt in no mood to do battle for the Mr. Pousnetts of this world, and contented himself with a muttered remark to the effect that 'no good could be done by talking about the matter now. He had been given his chance, and could not take advantage of it.'

'I do not want to trouble ye with any talk concerning the pairtnership,' said Mr. McCullagh, looking at his son with an expression in which pity, contempt, and a lurking feeling of pride were curiously mingled. 'I did not bring ye here to go over the old ground again; but I do want to have a few words regarding your future, because I am much out in my estimate of Mr. Pousnett if, after a bit, he does not take some opportunity of sending you about your business.'

Robert looked up swiftly. After all, then, his father did not suspect that already the fiat had gone forth, the decisive words spoken. There was comfort in the thought, Robert felt, though any one might have wondered where he found it; and his manner at once lost the certain hard defiance which had characterised it since his entrance.

Astute as he was, Mr. McCullagh failed to guess the cause of the sudden brightness in his son's face, ascribing the altered tone in which Robert said,

'I think it is very likely he will,' to relief at the idea that some 'feasible plan of making a living was about to be proposed to him.'

'I am truly glad to see you are beginning to look at the affair sensibly,' observed Mr. McCullagh. 'It is so much by far easier to come to some just conclusion about the future, if a man isn't flying off at a tangent over every word spoken in the present. What I have got to say to you will seem, no doubt, a very poor sort of proposal after the big prize that was dangled before your eyes; but remember this, my offer is an honest one, there is no nonsense or sham-believe about it, and I make it free of all condition and stipulation whatsoever.'

'You are very kind, sir, I am sure,' said Robert, puzzled beyond measure. After all, was his father going to suggest taking him into partnership in his own sweet-stuffline of trade? On the whole, the young man did not think he would care for such a distinction; but at any rate he felt it might be well to hear all there was to be heard.

'I need not go back over what I have told you before about my own humble beginnings,' proceeded Mr. McCullagh; 'because you are not me, and your time is now, and mine was then; and, all things considered, it would not be fair to expect you to do at your age what I felt small hardship when I was nearly ten years your junior; so we'll put my doings on one side,' added Mr. McCullagh magnanimously, 'and just see what we can devise to start you afresh, if Mr. Pousnett should tell you he wants your room instead of your company.'

Robert winced; there was, alas, no 'if' in the case. He had been given to understand too clearly

Mr. Pousnett could exist without him.

'It seems to me,' went on Mr. McCullagh, 'that, supposing the worst comes to the worst, it would be well for ye to try and do something for yourself. A situation is all very well early in life; but as a man gets on, I think he has more heart in working for himself than in toiling for a master. Now just at the present time there are openings for making money that may not soon occur again, and what I am willing to do for ye is this: cast about and see the thing ye feel most fit for. Consider at your leisure the line ye think you're most likely to succeed in, decide as to the locality where ye had best take an office, and when ye are ready, come to me, and I'll do this: guarantee your rent for one year, furnish your office, so as to enable ye to begin in a creditable manner, and lodge five hundred pounds for ye in the bank: that, with good management, ye may increase twentyfold before you're forty years of age.'

Here was a noble brought to ninepence! Here was an air castle resolved into a mud cabin! A possible seven thousand pounds, and many impossible seven thousand pounds at the back of it, reduced to five hundred, with no certainty or expectation beyond, save that of hard work! When a man asks his fellow for ten pounds, and is offered half-a-crown instead, with an air as if that sum would purchase the Koh-i-noor, he rarely feels ecstatically grateful. From the donor's point of view he should do so, perhaps; from Mr. McCullagh's, Robert ought to have blessed him for his generosity. Disappointed though he was, the young man made an effort to express his gratitude. He recognised all such an offer meant to a

hard prudent man of business. Six hundred or six hundred and fifty pounds in hard cash he knew was a handsome present for his father to suggest; he had done nothing like this for his other sons. Of course it was possible he might do more for them eventually; but, then, he also might do the same by Robert. Deep in his soul he felt his father was entitled to his heartiest thanks, and yet he found it impossible to do more than utter a few words of commonplace gratitude.

'I'm no looking for gratitude,' said Mr. McCullagh, perhaps a little vexed at his son's lack of enthusiasm; 'and if ye can put the money to good account, it'll be more to me than a bushel-measure full of thanks. Ye're my firstborn, Robert, and though ye're not much like your father in ways or thoughts, any more than looks, I'm very sure you're not answerable for that. The Almighty never meant us all to be just similar; and I—I want to do what is right and kind by ye, if I can.'

'That I'm sure you do,' said Robert, touched for the moment by something in his father's tone he had never heard ringing through it before; 'and I am very, very grateful to you.'

'And ye're very welcome,' answered Mr. McCullagh. 'It's a come-down I can well understand; but still, as time goes on, I hope you will be able to make a fine business out of it. I began in a cellar at ten pounds a year, and look at me now. Though I say it as maybe shouldn't say it, there's not a man in the City better trusted or more respected than "plain auld Rab."'

'I know that, father, well,' agreed Robert, remembering many things Mr. Pousnett had said about his parent.

'After ye spoke to me first,' went on Mr. McCullagh, 'I kept turning your matter over and over in my mind, and I just determined, if Pousnetts were playing at fast and loose with ye, I would see ye did not fall too heavy; so if the worst should happen, don't trouble yourself about looking after another situation. While ye're fresh out of such a big firm set up for yerself, and see if ye can't make a spoon. There's no call for ye to spoil a horn.'

'And what line of business should you suggest, sir, as the best for me to take to?' asked his son, who had sense enough to understand that the words just uttered contained both rhyme and reason.

'Time enough for all that,' answered Mr. McCullagh. 'We won't rush at any scheme; it's fair and softly that oftenmost wins the day. Consider the matter quietly, and then, if Pousnett should say he is going to make different arrangements, come to me, and we'll put our two heads together, and see what we can make out of them.'

There are many people in the world who consider frankness a mistake, and draw a wide distinction between keeping silence and telling a lie; yet the fact is that, in many cases, reticence and falsehood prove synonymous terms, and produce eventually the same disastrous effects.

By holding his tongue at that critical moment, and failing to say, 'Virtually Mr. Pousnett has already dismissed me,' Robert McCullagh commenced that course of deceit which eventually caused him much misery.

He had never been candid with his father, and at this critical juncture he felt it more than he could do to confess: 'I sha'n't be in Pousnetts' long; the sooner

I clear out of the place, the better Mr. Pousnett will be pleased.'

'And while we are talking about your future, Robert,' continued Mr. McCullagh, totally unconscious of the trouble agitating his son's mind, 'there is another matter I want to say a word about. Don't ye think it would keep ye together a bit if ye took to yerself a companion?'

'What sort of a companion?' asked the young man, in amazement.

'Why, a wife, to be sure,' answered his father somewhat testily.

'A wife!' repeated Robert. 'Where would I get one? What would I do with her?'

'I know where ye could get one,' said Mr. McCullagh. 'What ye would do with her is quite another question—no treat her ill, however, I hope.'

'You may be very sure I would not ill-treat any woman,' answered his son; 'but I have never yet seen the person I should like to marry.'

'That's strange,' mused Mr. McCullagh; 'and you getting on for thirty year of age.'

'It may be strange, but it's true,' Robert replied.

'And yet there's a young woman who is very fond of you, if I am not greatly mistaken.'

'Of me! Who on earth is she?'

'Jest Effie, the creature.'

'Effie?' echoed Robert. 'D'ye mean Effie Nicol?'

'I do not know any other Effie,' was the answer, dryly spoken.

'But what makes you think she cares for me?'

'Man, man, if ye hadn't been so taken up with yerself and your concerns, with your curly head and your bright eyes, and your nice cravats and light canes,

you'd have found that out long and long ago. She's young, and she's not bold, and she has not the gift of the gab, and she'd be ashamed to put herself forward; but any one with half an eye could tell she likes the very ground ye step on.'

'What an awful idea!' ejaculated Robert involuntarily.

'What's an awful idea?' asked Mr. McCullagh sharply. 'Isn't it a good thing for a wife to like her husband? D'ye think it is a happiness for a man to feel she is aye scorning and looking down upon him?'

'No, sir, I do not; but I think a man should love his wife, and most certainly I do not love Effie.'

'Just give your mind to the matter, and ye'll soon care quite enough for her.'

'That I am sure I never should,' was the quick retort. 'I have not the smallest fancy for spending my life with a mute.'

Mr. McCullagh laughed sardonically.

'When ye've been married to her a year ye'll find out the difference; maybe ye'll be wishing then she had never found the use of her tongue.'

'I have not a word to say against Effie,' began Mr. Robert McCullagh desperately.

'If ye had, ye'd best not say it before me,' interpolated his father.

'I said I had not. She is a good girl, I make no doubt, and I hope she may take the fancy of some worthy man; but so far as I am concerned, if there was not another girl on the face of the earth, I would not marry Effie Nicol.'

'Well, well,' said Mr. McCullagh soothingly, 'ye need not make such a racket about the matter; nobody's going to force ye to marry her. If ye don't

like the lass, and can't like her, why, somebody else will, that's all there's to be said. She's fond of ye, as I said; but I'll be bound she won't break her heart about ye; and as ye say it's just impossible ye could ever fancy her, I'll soon put the notion out of her head. I am sure I don't know how it ever got there.'

'Nor I,' said Robert emphatically; 'not through any fault of mine, that is quite certain.'

'I wish ye could have made a match of it,' observed Mr. McCullagh, in a matter-of-fact sort of way, as if he were talking about a deal in Scotch provisions, or a lease of some eligible business premises; 'but, however, that's neither here nor there. She'd have made ye a good managing sort of wife, and helped ye to put by something against a rainy day; still, as it's not to be, why, it won't.'

'It can't be, sir,' amended his son.

'That's just what I'm saying, and so we needn't waste any more breath talking over impossibilities. Ye'll bear in mind, though, what I mentioned about that five hundred pounds. I'll put it on one side, so if ye do get the route at Pousnetts', or if ye should think ye'd like to try for yourself, it'll be ready.'

'I really do not know how to thank you sufficiently, father,' said Robert, with as much show of gratitude as he could call up.

'I can tell ye,' answered Mr. McCullagh: 'put the money to a good use—mind the parable of the talents—and neither fling the cash away, nor fail to make more of it. There's a deal to be done with five hundred pounds in ready cash if a man knows how to lay that amount out judiciously. Situated as ye are, Robert, ye ought to know how to lay your

hand on many and many a bargain.'

'Yes, sir, I often know where bargains might be picked up.'

'Then, for the Lord's sake, don't let them slip!' entreated Mr. McCullagh, with an earnestness of look and diction which was quite pathetic. 'If ye are so situated ye can't turn them to account yourself, let me have a chance to make an honest penny. I am afraid ye haven't been half wide enough awake. Why, the flotsam and jetsam floating by a big house like Pousnetts' ought to be enough to make a dozen moderate fortunes. Keep your eyes open, Robert, and God be with ye! Mind about the five hundred, and if ye see or hear of a chance, don't let it escape ye.'

'It shall not,' answered Robert, inwardly lamenting he had permitted so many likely things to elude his grasp.

'That's right,' returned his father; 'and now I'll bid ye good-morning, for you must be wanting to make your way to Pousnetts', and I've an engagement in Little Britain before eleven. I hope ye feel a bit more content.'

'It would be strange if I did not, sir,' replied his son; but Mr. McCullagh understood his words lacked the ring of true sincerity, and when Robert left the room, said audibly,

'He's hearkening after the flesh-pots of that vile land of Egypt. It's a pity, but I won't be hard upon him; no, the Almighty knows I want to do right by the lad, though I am not going to give my hard-earned money to make him a cipher among those grand folks, who don't care a two-penny-piece what becomes of him so long as he serves their turn.'

CHAPTER VIII.

ALF MOSTIN.

After leaving Basinghall-street, the object of Mr. McCullagh's anxious cogitations did not immediately proceed to Pousnetts' offices. It did not seem to him that he ever wanted to return thither. There had been a time when each step which conducted him towards Leadenhall-street was a pleasure; but in those days, that now seemed remote, though not yet a fortnight old, he was merely a manager, without a hope or thought of partnership, it is true, but also without the slightest fear or expectation of dismissal.

Now virtually he had received notice that his services could be dispensed with, and, as he walked along, the future looked very blank to him, spite of his father's offer of five hundred pounds, out of which that gentleman believed he ought to have no difficulty in making a fortune.

Almost without definite intention he involuntarily bent his steps towards North-street, in the neighbourhood of Barbican. As a child when in trouble turns naturally to its mother for consolation, so in the extremity of his depression Robert McCullagh thought with comfort of the only person of whom he had ever made a confidant—his second cousin, Alf Mostin.

Never even to his grandfather had he told the things he trusted to Alf. There was nothing in his life that agreeable relative, stanch friend, old schoolfellow, did not know; and the young man felt it would take the keen edge off his disappointment to hear his cousin's view of the matter, and to receive the ready sympathy he had never yet found denied him.

As he reached the house where

Mr. Alf Mostin resided, and carried on an unprosperous business, all upon the second floor, there came out upon the step the very prettiest girl Mr. Robert McCullagh had ever seen in the whole course of his life. She was evidently leaving the house, and turned at the instant of his arrival down North-street, so that she met the young man point-blank. She was like a gleam of sunshine in a dark place; and Robert, forgetting for the moment all his annoyances, stood upon the doorstep she had just vacated, looking after her retreating figure. While he watched, the wind served him a good turn, and the girl a scurvy trick. It blew her dress over a scraper which projected awkwardly upon the pavement; and as she walked on, unconscious of the catastrophe impending, gave the silk another twirl round the piece of iron as quickly and neatly as if it had done the mischief on purpose.

Next moment there was the sound of something being suddenly and violently rent; the lady was striving to extricate her skirt, and Robert was beside her, proffering his assistance. How pretty she was! How pleasantly she laughed! How modestly she blushed! How sweetly she thanked him for his help! How deftly she gathered her dress round her, so as to conceal the grievous slit in the poor cheap silk! How fair she was to look upon! What an exquisite rose-pink tinted her cheeks! What threads of gold flecked her brown sunny hair! Robert had scarcely self-possession enough left to raise his hat as she bowed and said, 'Good-morning.' If he never was in love before, he was in love now. Cupid had not been blind this time; he took straight aim, and shot the young man through the heart. 'Love at first sight,'

some one laughs, perhaps. It sounds ridiculous; and yet there are those who believe that this love at first sight is the only love a man remembers when he is taking his last sight of life for ever.

Like a man in a dream, young McCullagh waited till she turned the corner of the street and disappeared from outward view; then slowly he retraced his steps to the door from which she had emerged.

The ground and first floors were occupied by a solicitor, who used the rooms as offices; the basement and attics were retained by the old lady who lived on the amount her house produced by letting in this manner; on the second floor Alf Mostin resided, had resided for years. Could it be possible he knew the girl? Could she have been coming from his office? As the idea flashed through Robert's mind, for the first time in his life he felt a pang of jealousy.

Even the suspicion that his cousin was acquainted with a person five minutes previously he did not know existed, filled him with unreasoning alarm. Ah, if Effie Nicol had a poor chance before, she had none at all now! Then and for the future Robert McCullagh's hitherto vague ideas on the subject of female loveliness found embodiment in a pair of dark-gray eyes, shaded by darker lashes, a straight delicate nose, a frank mouth, a complexion such as is rarely seen save in young children, soft hair, amongst which the sunbeams seemed to have made their home, a slight willowy figure, and a manner which, though modest as a woman's could be, had yet about it a simple winning grace that might well have won favour even from the sex proverbially in such matters difficult to please.

Passing into the house from which this vision of loveliness had

emerged, Robert McCullagh made his way up to the floor occupied by his cousin. There were two doors on the landing, one of which, marked 'Office,' was used by Mr. Mostin for business purposes; whilst the other, bearing the legend 'Private,' he kept sacred to the delights of domestic life. Out of the office, which overlooked the street, there opened a small inner chamber, where Mr. Mostin slept.

Without waiting an answer to his knock, Robert opened the door marked private, and entered a room pervaded by a smell of fried bacon. Beside the fireplace, indeed, stood a gentleman in his shirtsleeves, who had evidently been engaged turning some rashers in the pan, when distracted from his employment by the advent of a visitor.

'It's you, is it, Bob?' he said cheerily, shifting a fork from his right hand to his left, and extending the former to Robert. 'You are just in time. The coffee is made, and the bacon will be done in a minute. Get yourself a cup, like a good fellow, and pull off your top-coat.'

'I can't stop, thank you,' said the new-comer, taking a position at the opposite side of the hearth, and standing propped up against the mantelpiece. 'I have breakfasted, and I must be getting on to the office.'

'Sit down, at any rate, man,' urged the other; 'there is an easy-chair beside you, and tell me the news. Why, it is an age since I saw you! What have you been doing?'

'Nothing that's any good,' answered Robert gloomily, the while his eyes wandered slowly and thoughtfully round the room. No; *she* could not have been there. A man without his coat, engaged in frying rashers of bacon,

in an atmosphere redolent of pig in its artificial state, could not have been visited by youth and beauty, by dark-gray eyes and sunny hair and peach-like cheeks, and a forehead as white as snow. It was simply impossible.

'Anything that's very bad?' asked Mr. Mostin, putting the rashers on a plate, and lifting the coffee-pot from the hob.

'Yes, a great deal that's bad,' replied his cousin; 'or, at least, other people have been doing it for me.'

'What's the matter now?' inquired Mr. Mostin, replacing the milk-jug, from which he was about to pour, on the table, and regarding his relation with a look of fixed attention.

'Go on with your breakfast, and I will tell you,' said Robert; and he drew his chair closer, though the room was so small he could well have made himself heard in any part of it.

'All right,' agreed his cousin, setting to work with a will upon the viands himself had prepared and spread on the hospitable board.

A good-looking man; a better-looking man than Robert McCullagh, though the latter was by far the handsomer of the two; a man with twice the brains and thrice the heart, yet one who would never do much good for himself by reason of a curse which had been laid on him at birth—inveterate laziness. All the talent of the Mostin family, and all their failings, seemed to have descended to him: all their kindness, all their versatility, all their want of thrift, all their power of making friends, all their facility for letting opportunities slip through their fingers. The man did not exist who could have made a good thing of life for this Alf Mostin, since, had any one

handed over to him a fine estate, he would, without indulgence in a single vice so called, soon have muddled it away.

Whether the lack of any kind of management be not as much a vice as gambling, drinking, or stealing, is a question the world has as yet decided in the negative. The day must come, however, I fancy, when the man who cannot make his incomings and his outgoings balance will be looked upon as little better than a thief.

In those days, in that state of life in which he had been born, Alf Mostin managed to rub along somehow. He sustained existence after an economical fashion, cooking his own meals when he had any, making his own bed, having in a woman but rarely to clear up, employing no errand-boy, and when he was absent from his office tacking pieces of paper on his door, which perhaps served his purpose better than any clerk. He had a pile of these papers laid aside in a corner ready for use; they varied from minutes to hours, from to-day till to-morrow, or even longer, which he used as expediency or fact warranted. For example: '1 P.M.—return in half an hour;' or 'Return in five minutes—please wait,' were usually genuine, and meant business; while 'Gone out of town—return on Thursday,' signified, as a rule, to the initiated that Mr. Alf Mostin had a pressing creditor he did not want to face, and that, instead of being in the country, he was really behind bolted doors sitting over the fire, striving with some novel to cheer his loneliness.

A useful man to have for a friend, since there was nothing in the whole gamut of sin and folly his fellow need have feared or been ashamed to tell him. He did not love wickedness *per se*;

but experience had taught him it was more natural than virtue; whilst for the evils arising out of bad management and weakness, he held that thorough sympathy no man can ever feel whose own life is not a series of shifts and make-believes, of excuses, procrastination, prevarication, and dexterous manipulation.

How he had drifted into the sea of turbid troubled waters in which he was engulfed it would be difficult to say. He did not go straight from school into the purgatory of debt, duns, close-shaving, and endless devices from which it now seemed as though nothing short of a miracle could release him. At some time, in some way, he took a wrong turn, and from that period he had proceeded slowly, but surely, downhill. Already honest traders shook their heads dubiously when Alf Mostin was spoken of; his paper was considered something more than 'shady'; his promises were simply regarded as in the nature of piecrust. There were those who did not care even to be seen talking to him where 'men do congregate'; and yet he had that power of making fresh and eligible acquaintances, and that accursed facility for raising money, perfectly inexplicable to toilers along the world's high-ways, who have not found it easy to make useful friends, and who are very sure silver and gold are not to be picked up without extreme labour on any road they have ever passed along.

Such, however, as he was, there he sat in his shirtsleeves at breakfast on the morning after Mr. Pousnett's party, eating bacon, drinking coffee, cutting himself hunches of bread, and all the while listening attentively to his cousin's tale of woe. He did not interrupt it by a word; he heard

in silence, as though the offer of a partnership in such a firm as Pousnetts' and an invitation to dinner from Portman-square to Basinghall-street were amongst the commonest incidents of ordinary existence.

Down almost to date Robert brought his narrative; he told about his father's offer, even repeated what he had said concerning Effie, ere Alf Mostin spoke. Then the only remark he made was,

'I wonder you ever mentioned the matter in Basinghall-street at all.'

'I should not have mentioned it, you may be very sure, if I had known what the result would prove.'

'Yes, but that is just what you ought to have known.'

'I didn't think there was a man in London who would have refused his son help to get him a partnership in Pousnetts.'

'Didn't you? Well, I could have told you that your father would be the man.'

'And such a chance!' said Robert gloomily. 'Such a chance as can never come again—never.'

'It was a grand chance,' agreed Mr. Mostin.

'And what on earth I am to do now I am sure I have not a notion.'

'You can't take to Effie and the five hundred pounds?'

'No, I would not marry Effie for fifty thousand pounds.'

'I don't think I would myself,' said Mr. Mostin musingly. 'She's uncommon still water; but I'd take my oath there's a devil at the bottom.'

Robert, who had been tracing a pattern with crumbs on the tablecloth, looked up quickly.

'You're wrong there, Alf; the girl has not a temper at all, she's colourless altogether.'

'Is she?' laughed Alf.

'Have you ever seen her cross?' asked Robert, in hot vindication of the girl he had pitied the preceding night.

'No, and I don't want to see her.'

'I had no notion you had ever noticed Effie at all,' said Robert curiously.

'I've noticed her,' was the reply. 'I've cast up the young lady, stock, lock, and barrel, and believe she is dangerous. However, we needn't talk about her now. Can't you take to the five hundred? Small beginnings, you know.'

'I am afraid I could not make much out of five hundred. I have been trained in too big a house for that.'

'It seems to me a man had better have nothing than such a sum,' said Mr. Mostin from the hearth, where, having finished his breakfast, he had now taken up his position. 'He can't lose nothing; and he can lose five hundred, and hear a deuce of a row about it too.'

'Which I should, if I lost it,' answered Robert, to whom this view of the question had not previously occurred.

'What bothers me is why you went to your father at all,' said Mr. Mostin, reverting to his first inquiry. 'You must have known he would refuse to help you.'

'How was I to know anything of the sort?'

'How? Just the way everybody else does. Men who like to keep what he calls "a grip of the siller" are not in the habit of presenting even a beloved first-born with seven thousand pounds in hard cash.'

'But it would not have been giving it to me. If he had put his name on a bill at twelve, eighteen months, two years, Mr.

Pousnett would have made no difficulty.'

'Yes; but, you know, he won't accept a bill,' said Alf Mostin determinedly; 'and, what's worse,' he went on, with a comical expression, 'he won't take one: he actually refused mine.'

'You don't mean to say you offered it?'

'Why not, my son? And had he taken that bill, it would have been paid. The chance came in my way of sending out goods to that place which, in the charming alliteration of the City, is called the Cursed Crimea. Your parent could have supplied many, and got all of them. I pointed out to him it was an opportunity which might never occur again. I offered him my bill, and promised he should have that of a good firm to replace it the moment the goods were shipped. I employed all my eloquence. I said things which, I think, ought to have drawn blood from a stone; but your papa did not see it. He thought, it wouldna jest suit him; that he didna care to extend his trade in the direction I pointed out; that he had as much to do as he could weel get through, but he felt no doubt there were bigger houses would be glad to execute my order. Having uttered which sardonic remark, he added he was busy, and must wish me good-day.'

'And then—'

'Then I went and blasphemed like the parrot under my breath all the way up the court, and all the way back to these diggings.'

'But, Alf—'

'Yes, Robert.'

'There is this difference between the cases—that you very often do not pay.'

'There is no difference at all; you might not pay.'

'I should have been sure to do so.'

'That is what everybody believes when he borrows money, backs a bill, takes a house, buys on credit, makes himself liable in any way. Do you know, Robert, if a man can act up to his profession, I think your father is right. The devil of it is, there is not one in a thousand, there is not one in ten, in a hundred thousand, who could lay down a rule and stick to it as he has done. In the first place, carrying such a rule out means an inflexibility of purpose happily rare; in the next, it means giving up everything a human being finds pleasant to the eye and grateful to the sense. For instance, I would rather have impecuniosity and freedom than a safe business and the *ménage* in Basinghall-street. It all resolves itself into a question of temperament. His is cold and hard, like his native climate. Here in London we can't live on sheep's head and oatmeal porridge; we like our beer and our steak if we can get them, and the consequence is often bankruptcy, no doubt; yet we have enjoyed the ale and the steak more, I fancy, than we should the sheep's head with prosperity, and the oatmeal and a balance at the bank.'

'I thought the sight of that magnificent house last night might have turned his purpose,' said Robert, disregarding his cousin's abstract reflections, and reverting, as people always do revert, to his own aims and disappointments.

'Did you? To such a man the sight of a fine house merely serves the same purpose as a lighthouse does to vessels—warns him to keep his distance.'

'You are in a most cynical mood this morning, Alf,' said his cousin irritably.

'Possibly I want five pounds badly,' answered the other.

'Take it, then, for Heaven's sake!' exclaimed Robert, throwing a note on the table.

'And Barak said to Balaam—' muttered Mr. Mostin to himself, turning his face towards the fire, and kicking down the coals, which were burning hollow, with the heel of his slipper. 'I wonder,' he resumed, after that momentary diversion, 'whether Doyle could not manage this business for you?'

'Who is Doyle?'

'Don't you know Doyle? Bless your innocent heart, I thought every one in the City knew that friend of youth and inexperience. Doyle is a gentleman who was born in Dublin. His papa's name being Schnee, and his mamma's Burt, he decided that Doyle would commit neither side of the house. Mr. Schnee was a German, Mrs. Burt an American. Doyle is an Irishman; and when I say that in his own person he unites the vices of the three nations mentioned, you will perhaps think I have stated enough.'

Having concluded which eulogium upon his friend, Mr. Mostin turned the little clock that adorned his mantelshelf right round, took off its back, and commenced winding it up with the claw of a hammer.

With a horrible fascination Robert watched this performance; the man to whom it could have occurred to wind up a clock with the claw of a hammer might really perhaps get him seven thousand pounds. To be sure he stood in want of five pounds himself, but that was nothing. If he lacked that amount to-day, he might have five hundred to-morrow.

'I think Doyle would do it for you somehow,' said Alf Mostin, as he replaced the clock in its former position, and listened with an approving expression to its brisker click, click, click, click.

'Shall we go and ask him? It could not do any harm to ask him, could it?'

'No, that it could not!' exclaimed Robert McCullagh, springing to his feet. 'Where is his place?'

'In Bush-lane,' answered Mr. Mostin briefly, 'the very dirtiest dingiest hole in the City. However, if the money can be got, it does not matter what mine it is dug out of. Gold's always gold, Bob, even when it comes from a certain locality which shall be nameless.'

'If I could but get it, if I only could!' sighed his cousin mournfully.

'Well, let's try, at any rate,' said Mr. Mostin, donning coat, topcoat, and hat with the speed of a magician. 'Am I all right, Bob? One minute; I must just stick up a notice—"Return at one"—that will give law enough. Now come along; there's no one to fling an old shoe after us for luck, unless I ask Mother Clements to perform that ceremony.'

As he spoke, a very different vision from Mother Clements recurred to Robert's memory, and instantly he spoke.

'By the bye, Alf,' he said, 'as I was coming in here this morning I met a lady.'

'Did you really? Well, that is nothing to make a song about.'

'But she was young and very pretty.'

'Likely enough. Some mornings all the pretty girls turn out; some mornings all the old hags.'

'She came out of this house.'

'You don't mean it?'

'Yes, I do. Is she a friend—of yours?'

'Of mine! Lord love you, I do not know a pretty girl; if I did, she would not come visiting a chap so out at elbows with Fortune as I am.'

'I wonder who she was?'

'What does it matter? We have other fish to fry besides pretty girls. Let us go and see Doyle.'

CHAPTER IX.

'COME INTO MY PARLOUR,' ETC.

As they strode hurriedly towards Bush-lane, Mr. Robert McCullagh junior felt grateful to his cousin for selecting the narrowest and least frequented of the City thoroughfares. So far as it was in the young man's nature, he loved Alf Mostin, yet for very different reasons from those which occasioned the avoidance of 'good men and true,' Robert would rather not have been seen walking at high noon with his relative. Mr. Mostin was, in truth, as regardless of his appearance as of his character. Muddy boots, unbrushed coat, shabby hat, gloveless hands at a period when gloves obtained, were to him matters of the utmost indifference. Always careless concerning his dress, he had, since the occasion of the World's Fair in Hyde Park, become, as his uncle's wife said, 'perfectly dreadful.' From the day he first set foot in the great glass house he let his beard and moustache grow, and that at a time when such facial adornments seemed not merely strange to the mass of Englishmen, but wicked. Likewise he wore coloured neckties instead of orthodox black, and shirts with pink and lilac and blue stripes upon them, which filled the soul of Robert McCullagh with dismay. Likewise he never carried an umbrella, though he was often to be met nursing a great brown-paper parcel. A capital fellow, no doubt, in North-street or in the shades of evening, but scarcely the com-

panion a foolish fop like young McCullagh felt proud to be striving to keep step with, when at any minute he might meet one of Pousnetts' clerks or Pousnetts' customers.

Quite unconscious of the feelings at work in his cousin's breast, Mr. Mostin nevertheless intuitively never, save when it was necessary to cross a great thoroughfare, touched even upon the leading streets. He avoided all busy bustling pavements as if by instinct; he knew short cuts no man save himself could ever have discovered; he went straight up passages which led apparently only to some house, and went through the building out into another street; he was far better acquainted with the queer courts and alleys of the City than Mr. Pousnett's manager, and merely for the 'sport,' as it seemed, took so-called short cuts and indulged his fancy for devious ways when the direct route would have served as well, if not better.

On the present occasion nothing, however, could have pleased Robert more than this game of dodging here and there, of turning into alleys apparently blind, and emerging through queer little passages into narrow lanes beyond. Many of these places are now done away with altogether, and those which are left it would be difficult to indicate to an outsider; but on the morning in question they served their turn. Not a creature that the cousins knew did they meet; not an acquaintance save the wind greeted them the whole length of the way from North-street to Bush-lane.

Mr. Doyle was in his office and alone. His clerk chanced to be out, so he answered Alf Mostin's knock himself.

'O, how d'ye do, Mr. Mostin?'

he said, extending his hand. 'Pray come in. Is this gentleman with you?' he asked, turning to Robert.

'It is my cousin. Come in, Bob;' and the three accordingly entered Mr. Doyle's inner office.

Dingy most certainly it was, but dirty decidedly not. Next to great financial ability Mr. Doyle's strongest point was order. If he had removed in the morning, evening would have found him with books, boxes, papers all ranged methodically in due place, all ready to his hand. He never wasted his time hunting through piles of untidy papers for a letter. He could produce any document at a moment's notice; his correspondence was pigeon-holed, his bills and receipts filed alphabetically, his accounts kept—save for one peculiarity—so that all who ran might read. A housekeeper was paid for keeping the place clean; and Mr. Doyle had no idea of paying any one when work was either left undone or neglected altogether.

About his office there was nothing suggestive of the mere commonplace money-lender, nothing such as we read of in books and see occasionally in real life. Not a picture of any sort, not a scrap of china, not a sample bottle of sherry: no dentist's operating-room was ever barer of ornament than the apartment where Mr. Doyle received his clients. Over the mantelshelf hung a map of South America; on the wall, between two high cabinets, was suspended an almanac; an old Turkey carpet covered the centre of the floor; an escritoire stood in a recess beside the fireplace, flanked by a huge safe. Almost every available foot of wall-space was occupied by cupboards of one sort or other. These cupboards all locked; when Mr. Doyle left his

office at night he did not leave so much as his blotting-pad on the table to add to the housekeeper's labour, or to whet her laudable curiosity.

In person Mr. Doyle was as clean and orderly as his office. A man of middle height, and more than middle age, getting, as men in the City are apt to do, a little fat, with a round face so close-shaven as not to leave even the vestige of a hair on cheek, chin, or lip, a head already giving signs of coming baldness, a perfectly expressionless cast of countenance, light-blue eyes, light eyelashes, a white but healthy complexion, plump well-formed hands, ears with that curl in them which is supposed—I think untruly—to indicate a love of music, and a somewhat short neck, necessitating, as he liked to hold himself erect, an upward carriage of the chin, imagined by many to denote conceit.

In this idea, however, the many were totally wrong. Probably the man never existed who was so destitute of conceit as Mr. Doyle. Mentally he chanced to be too clever for such a weakness; and as regards physical matters he entertained a contempt, warranted, perhaps, by the circumstances of his experience, for handsome men. He despised good looks in his own sex, just as he contemned the use of scents.

'Beauty and eau-de-Cologne are the perquisites of women,' he was wont to remark; 'men ought to have something better to do than think about perfume and padding.'

Mr. Doyle had, at any rate, something different: to make money, and to keep it, so that one day he might be rich enough to drop money-lending altogether, and start in quite another line of life.

Next to his desire to amass

wealth was a mania for respectability. It needed but one look at his appearance to guess the name of the god on whose shrine he was willing to sacrifice. The cut and quality of his clothes, his immaculate linen, the stiffness of his stand-up collar, the tie of his cravat, the spotlessness of his cuffs, the plain solidity of his watchchain, the polish of his boots, the measured flow of his words, from which every trace of accent had been carefully and painfully eliminated—these things, and such as these, were but the outward and visible signs of the ceaseless war two most opposite characteristics were ever waging in Mr. Doyle's heart. Even the wife of his bosom had no idea of the nature of the business in which her liege lord was engaged. He lived in the suburbs—indeed, quite in the country, a long way from London, as distances counted in those days. He had a good house at Enfield Highway, with some nine or ten acres of land attached; he was a churchwarden, and much esteemed by the local clergy; his boys and girls went to schools in the neighbourhood, and were in much favour with their masters and mistresses. The family had quite a nice little circle of acquaintances, who knew no more of their friends' position in life than that they were very pleasant people, who gave agreeable parties, and that the husband was 'something in the City.'

Many of the men looked his name up in the *Directory*, but could not find it for the reason indicated by Alf Mostin.

The ground, however, Mr. Mostin implied was wrong. Mr. Schnee and Mrs. Burt, widow of Barry Burt of New York, United States, and Cork, Ireland, were as honestly married as man and woman could be; and when in the course of

time young Richard was born in Dublin, whither his father had come to produce an opera which never was put on the boards, not a question could be entertained on the subject of the child's legitimacy. Schnee the elder, being a musician, a dreamer, a poet, and a spendthrift, no one will be surprised to hear he captivated the heart of an eminently hard-headed practical woman, who gave him the love of her life, and, what seemed of perhaps more consequence to the German, all the careful savings left to her by Mr. Burt, provision merchant.

Need it be said that before Richard was ten years of age Mr. Burt's money was muddled away, that his father sought an engagement in the Theatre Royal, Dublin, that his mother was obliged to let lodgings, and that all the ills and evils of poverty were patent to the lad ere he entered his teens?

He saw the life of that lower Bohemia, which does not differ much from the existence lauded by writers of fiction, save that it drinks ale instead of champagne, and smokes pipes perforce because it cannot afford cigars. He understood the pain of such an experience, if he failed to participate in the pleasure; he and his mother were obliged to face duns, and wear poor clothing, and content themselves with scanty meals, and bear the angry taunts of creditors.

When he got a situation as errand-lad in Mr. Doyle's offices in Dame-street, the very jacket he had on his back was charitably given him by a pawnbroker, between whom and the elder Schnee the most friendly relations existed.

Mr. Doyle did a good deal in a quiet way of the same sort of thing as the pawnbroker did

openly. He advanced money. Most young men of family came to him when they were hard up. Many owners of landed estates also were deep in his books. 'An oily, plausible, agreeable scoundrel,' some one said of Mr. Doyle; but that some one being a debtor, perfect reliance cannot be placed upon his statements.

Mr. Doyle grew old and prospered; Richard Schnee grew older also, and looked about him to see how he might prosper too. He was a remarkably sharp lad, who developed into a very clever young man; so clever, that Mr. Doyle suggested articling him without a premium, and inducting him free of expense into those mysteries which had driven many a client into foreign parts or the nearest asylum; but his clerk did not quite see it. He believed an excellent business could be done without the assistance of further legal knowledge than he already possessed; he had a notion the 'oracle could be worked' with unprecedented success between himself in London and Mr. Doyle in Dublin; he believed there was quite a virgin mine of gold to be discovered in the City by any one competent to keep his mouth shut and his eyes open.

Eventually he brought Mr. Doyle round to his way of thinking, and started in that gentleman's name, and on that gentleman's capital and account, in Bush-lane.

He had not been there a year, however, before Mr. Doyle died, and he was obliged to account for and hand over all the moneys intrusted to him. The business also would have been closed had he not decided to carry it on himself. At first it proved uphill work, but eventually he got into smooth waters.

He made a connection and met

with a capitalist willing to co-operate with him. In due time he saw a lady he thought he should like to marry, and whom indeed he did marry in his rightful name of Schnee. Germans were not, however, at that time as popular in London, or as plentiful, as they have since become; and accordingly it was not long ere he dropped his original cognomen, substituting in its stead the simpler translation Snow. As Mr. Snow he was known at Enfield Highway, attended local meetings, handed in his subscriptions for the repair of the church, the purchase of an organ, and many other such good deeds; but still there was no secrecy about the matter. Every one knew his father had been a German called Schnee, which name was Snow in English. People understood the gentleman to be British in feeling as well as by birth, and approved the sentiment which led him to adapt his nomenclature to that of the land to which he 'owed so much.'

What they did not know was that Mr. Snow traded as Jeremiah Doyle, and lent money at sixty, one hundred, one hundred and twenty per cent. Perhaps if they had they would not have cared; but it was a secret the owner desired to preserve intact.

He had been made aware Alf Mostin held the key, but he was also confident the young man would make no bad use of his knowledge. As much as Mr. Doyle (for convenience he must be called by that name) could like anybody, he liked Alf, the very antipodes of himself; he had done him many a good turn, he was prepared to do him many more; and what is even more astonishing, he believed Mr. Mostin liked him. There is nothing on the face of the earth so amazing about money-lenders as this. They are prepared,

if need be, to sell the bed from under a sick man, yet they are not prepared to hear the sick man and all his family hate them with a perfect hatred. It is just the same with lawyers. If it were not fear of infection, they would serve a writ on a man down with smallpox. Nevertheless, they profess incredulity when told there are actually persons upon this earth who believe they care for nothing in the heaven above or the earth below except costs.

'I am afraid,' said a wealthy man the other day, 'even to put my head inside my lawyer's office-door, for I know it will cost me thirteen-and-four.'

And did not Dr. Kenealy declare his solicitor 'expected six-and-eightpence for wishing him good-morning in the street'?

Ah, it would have taken many six-and-eightpences to satisfy Mr. Doyle. Sovereigns chinked about in that office like farthings. What he made, who but himself could tell? If he had not lost sometimes, he might have been a millionaire.

'Well, and what can I do for you this morning?' he asked, settling himself comfortably in his office-chair, and looking amiably across the table at Mr. Mostin.

'For a wonder, nothing,' was the answer. 'That is, I daresay you could do many things; but as I am very sure you would not, why waste time in discussing them? I am here entirely on my cousin's behalf. I don't know whether you can serve him or not; but, at all events, I thought it could do no harm for him and you to have a chat together.'

'Very happy, I am sure Mr. —?' answered Mr. Doyle interrogatively.

'McCullagh,' supplied Alf Mostin: 'Robert McCullagh.'

'Not Mr. Robert McCullagh

of Bread-street-hill?' suggested Mr. Doyle, acknowledging the introduction with a courteous inclination of his head.

'O dear, no!' explained Mr. Mostin, in a tone which implied the McCullagh of Bread-street-hill was a different and most inferior creation. 'Son of Robert McCullagh of Basinghall-street. You have heard of him?'

'I am sorry to confess that I have not,' answered Mr. Doyle.

Alf Mostin laughed.

'After all,' he said, 'I do not know why I asked so silly a question. You never met his name travelling about the City on paper, I know.'

'That is very true; I never have.'

'No, nor any other man.'

'My father never draws nor accepts a bill,' explained Robert, speaking for the first time.

'He must be either very prosperous or very poor, then,' said Mr. Doyle. 'For your sake, I hope he is the former.'

'He is prosperous enough, I believe,' answered Robert dryly. 'He has a good business, and he spends little out of it.'

Mr. Doyle looked at the young man with attention, looked him over in one comprehensive glance, and decided that for once he found his instincts at fault.

He could not form the remotest idea what his visitor wanted. There was that about Robert's whole appearance which negated any idea of his being hard up, or of his having done anything to bring him within reach of the arm of the criminal law. One time and another Mr. Doyle had made a nice little sum of money by finding, at critical periods, funds to satisfy a wrathful employer who gave a parent, say, till six o'clock to make up his son's defalcations. Clerks at

the verge of despair, merchants on the point of committing suicide, men who had but the start of a few hours to flee from justice—all, all had sat in that room and told their stories, and been helped or sent away desperate, just as Mr. Doyle had seen the chance of making much or nothing out of their necessities.

But he could perceive plainly that his present visitor did not come within any of these categories. Alf Mostin, he was well aware, would have brought a man red-handed to him, and asked for twenty pounds to take him to Spain or Jericho, as expediency might suggest. The introduction went for nothing. What did go for a good deal was Robert's look of childlike simplicity, the quietude of his hands, the repose of his mouth. *He* had not stolen or forged, or got himself into any mess; *he* was not at his wits' ends to pay a gambling debt or replace his employer's cash. What the deuce did he want? What on earth had brought him to Bush-lane?

'I gather from your words that you think your father does not make you a sufficient allowance?' said Mr. Doyle, after that one swift glance which told the many wants which Robert had not.

Alf Mostin laughed outright.

'Did your dad ever give you anything except good advice, Bob?' he asked.

'I do not think he did anything to speak of,' answered Robert, 'till this morning, you know.'

'And this morning?' inquired Mr. Doyle, still all at sea.

'He offered him five hundred pounds,' explained Mr. Mostin, 'and a wife.'

'And you don't like the proposed wife, Mr. McCullagh?' said Mr. Doyle, groping his way.

'O, the five hundred pounds did not depend on the wife,' said Mr. Mostin joyously. 'She was thrown in.'

'I really am at a loss—' began the money-lender.

'My cousin is so fond of his joke,' said Robert, who had never before felt Alf Mostin's jests so out of harmony with his own mood.

'If you will kindly tell me how I can help or advise you?' suggested Mr. Doyle, whose time really was of value.

'That's it,' interposed Mr. Mostin. 'Advice—that's what you can give us. Here's how we stand. I am sorry you don't know my cousin's father, even by repute; if you did, you would understand the position better. Here goes, however, to try and explain it. Mr. McCullagh the elder is a self-made man, and a Scotchman. He came to London with about a crown-piece in his pocket, and he is now worth—Heaven knows how much, we do not. He did not get on particularly well with his wife—many men, self-made and otherwise, do not get on with their wives—and the firstborn, my cousin, whom you see before you, was brought up by his grandfather, Mr. Mostin, my uncle—'

'O!' said Mr. Doyle, who thought he was beginning to see light.

'Before my uncle dropped into the line of business out of which he has of late years made his living,' proceeded Alf Mostin, with an emphasis not thrown away on one of his hearers, 'he got his grandson a berth in Pousnetts—'

'THE Pousnett?' inquired Mr. Doyle.

'THE Pousnett,' Mr. Mostin replied. 'He has been in that house, man and boy—how many years, Bob?'

'Fourteen,' answered 'Bob,' thus appealed to. 'Fourteen years, Mr. Doyle.'

'A double apprenticeship,' murmured the money-lender suavely.

'Well, yes,' agreed Alf Mostin. 'He has gone from post to post, climbed every step of the way, I can tell you, from young clerk to older clerk, from older clerk to manager.'

Mr. Doyle regarded Robert McCullagh with attentive interest.

'An onerous post,' he observed tentatively.

'I don't think he ever found it so,' said Alf Mostin, in his cheeriest manner. 'Bob never was afraid of work, and never shirked it. Pousnett thought so too, apparently; for, somewhat less than a fortnight ago, he offered him a partnership on condition he could bring seven thousand pounds—just a flea-bite—into the business.'

'Yes!' said Mr. Doyle, interested at last.

'Bob goes to his father, never doubting the old man would guarantee the amount at once, and is met with a decided negative. His brother has done so good a thing for himself, it dwarfs Bob's chance at once—Kenneth is going to marry the daughter of V. Johnstone of Liverpool, and become a partner without paying down a halfpenny—and therefore the Pousnett offer is regarded with disdain. Pousnett asks the old man to dinner, is as civil as civil can be, tells him what a chance he is throwing away, and all the rest of it; but without producing the smallest effect. He never backed a bill, and he never will. He thinks Pousnetts' may be a very grand offer; but it is one his son cannot possibly accept. He believes Pousnett only wants to get civilly rid of his manager; and, acting on that

supposition, says he is willing to find him five hundred pounds to start on his own account.'

'Well, and why don't you start on your own account?' asked Mr. Doyle, turning towards Robert. 'Five hundred pounds is a very nice little nest-egg.'

The young man shook his head.

'I would rather, if need be, take another situation,' he answered. 'My father means well, but he and I never could stable our horses together; and I think it would drive me mad to start with that millstone of five hundred pounds hung round my neck.'

'He offers to give you the amount in question, though, does he not?' suggested Mr. Doyle.

'He does not want it back again, if that is what you mean,' said Robert; 'but he would want to know what became of every shilling of it. If you knew my father, you would better understand how I feel. I could not take that money from him.'

'And yet you could take fourteen times five hundred.'

'That would be quite a different matter,' returned Robert, flushing. 'Pousnetts' is a great business, and the result would not be dependent on my own personal exertions or judgment.'

'Besides, it is such a chance,' urged Mr. Mostin.

'It is a large sum to pay for it, though,' observed Mr. Doyle.

'Do you think so?' asked Alf Mostin. 'I can't agree with you there. It is more than doubtful whether there is another man in the City or in England to whom Mr. Pousnett would offer a partnership on the same terms.'

'You are very likely right,' agreed Mr. Doyle. 'May I put a question to you without offence?' he added, turning to Robert.

'Certainly,' said Robert, 'anything you like;' but he hoped,

spite of this permission, Mr. Doyle was not going to ask him whether Mr. Pousnett meant to dispense with his services.

'It is only this. Can you give me any idea, have you any idea yourself, *why* Mr. Pousnett offers to take you into the firm?'

Here it was again! His father's inquiry, his father's wonder, only differently worded. It never seemed to occur to either of them the manager might be wanted for himself.

Just for a moment the young man hesitated; then he said,

'I only know of one reason, and I scarcely like mentioning it, because—'

'You need not be afraid of telling me anything,' suggested Mr. Doyle; 'everything is in strict confidence here. I shall not make any bad use of what you tell me; you may be quite sure of that.'

'O, there is nothing to be ashamed of exactly, but I felt afraid you might think the remark conceited. I can't give you any reason except this—that I do think Mr. Pousnett has a liking for me.'

Mr. Doyle smiled—in spite of himself he smiled; the idea of love, or liking, or reverence, or faith influencing any business transaction was too much for his sense of the ludicrous.

That a man should gravely say he could step from manager to partner merely because he was dear to the heart of his employer seemed an excellent joke; and when in addition the man evidently believed his own statement, the jest became delicious.

Mr. Doyle could have roared over it; but he merely smiled, and remarked that from the little he had seen of his visitor he did not wonder Mr. Pousnett should entertain a regard for him.

'There are going to be changes

in the firm,' went on Robert, perfectly unconscious of the satire underlying Mr. Doyle's compliment, 'and I fancy Mr. Pousnett would rather have me near him than a stranger.'

'And quite natural too,' agreed Mr. Doyle. 'What are the changes?'

The manager told him; went once again over the ground he had travelled in Basinghall-street; enlarged upon the greatness and the glory of the house of Pousnett; spoke of the enormous trade it did, and of the still more enormous trade it expected to do; grew eloquent concerning Mr. Pousnett's business capacity, and only stopped suddenly, seeing the person he addressed in a brown study, and apparently not attending to a syllable he was saying.

But Mr. Doyle had not missed a word or a point. It is always unconscious utterances that reveal the true character; and in like manner it is invariably casual remarks which throw light on a mystery.

'Humph!' was all Mr. Doyle said, when Robert came to a conclusion; and rising, he walked to one of the cabinets, from which he drew a long thin book, which he opened and studied at a particular page. He had a reason, no doubt, for this reference; but what that reason might be, and whether it related to their business or his own, Alf Mostin and Robert McCullagh could not make out in the least.

Closing the book, and replacing it on the shelf, Mr. Doyle returned to his place.

'Would you mind telling me, Mr. McCullagh,' he said, 'what salary you receive from Mr. Pousnett?'

'Four hundred,' was the reply; 'but I have only had that within the last two years. I had three

hundred for some time previously. When I first went to the firm my stipend was almost nominal.'

'Just so,' remarked Mr. Doyle, to whom one thing, at all events, was patent, viz. that his visitor had no intention of deceiving him.

'You were to have had five hundred next year, were you not, Bob?' interposed his cousin.

'Yes; but the partnership was proposed instead.'

'And speaking roughly, what do you suppose your share would amount to annually, if you were able to take advantage of Mr. Pousnett's offer? It was Mr. Doyle who spoke.

'I am not to have much of a share at first, at all events,' answered Robert; 'but Mr. Pousnett did mention fourteen or fifteen hundred pounds as about the lowest calculation.'

'From your own knowledge, should you consider such a calculation likely to be correct?'

'Yes, quite correct.'

'And what percentage did you propose to pay your father for the money he advanced?'

'We never got so far as that; and then they all laughed.

'But you must have had some idea on the subject,' continued Mr. Doyle, when gravity reigned once more. 'What did you think of offering him?'

'I do not know that I thought of offering him anything,' was the frank reply. 'Of course Mr. Pousnett is too shrewd a man of business to suppose any one engaged in trade would take such a sum out of it at a minute's notice. He knew my father's name would be just as good as money, that he could get his bills done at Bank-rate; therefore the question of interest did not occur to either of us.'

'Cool, at any rate,' commented Mr. Doyle.

'Of course I should not expect

any stranger to advance money for nothing,' explained Robert eagerly.

'I do not suppose you would. If you did, you would find yourself miserably mistaken.'

Silence ensued for a minute after this home-thrust. Robert McCullagh could not speak, and Alf Mostin did not care to do so. It was Mr. Doyle who at length resumed the conversation.

'If a person could be found willing to advance such a sum of money,' he said, addressing Robert, 'what proposition do you think you could make to him?'

'I have not a notion,' answered the young man feebly.

'But that's nonsense, Bob,' struck in Mr. Mostin. 'What should you say would be a fair rate of interest, Mr. Doyle? A long percentage is out of the question in such a case as this.'

'Your cousin seems to imagine no percentage would be about the right thing to give.'

'I did not say that,' objected Robert.

'Well, then, Bank-rate,' amended Mr. Doyle, with a fine sneer.

'I did not mean that either,' answered the young man helplessly.

'Perhaps you will kindly tell us what you did mean,' suggested Mr. Doyle.

'I am sure I can scarcely tell what I meant,' said Robert, in desperation. 'I only know this, that if any man would enable me to get into Pousnetts' house, I would do anything that lay in my power for him in return.'

'You would really?'

'Really and truly,' answered the manager, in a tone in which nervousness and despair and hope were all curiously blended.

'The worst of it is,' remarked Mr. Doyle, 'that there does not seem much you can do. The

amount is large, and your prospects at present are but small. Suppose your share does come to fourteen hundred. The interest, even at ten per cent, on seven thousand pounds is seven hundred a year. Seven hundred a year for interest alone. How should you ever pay off the principal?'

'I would reduce it by five hundred a year,' said Robert.

Mr. Doyle smiled doubtfully.

'You have saved nothing hitherto,' he observed, as if he knew the fact from personal knowledge.

'No, but I would save now,' answered the young man.

'Are you in debt?'

'I owe my tailor ten pounds, perhaps.'

'Are you married? But I remember, you are not. Your father offered you a wife.'

'No, I am not married,' agreed Robert.

'And if as manager at Pousnetts' you contrived to spend four hundred a year, how do you propose to live on two hundred when you become a partner?'

'I'd manage somehow,' was the reply.

'Do you live at home?' asked Mr. Doyle—'with your father, I mean?'

'With my grandfather, Mr. Mostin.'

'O! You pay him something, I suppose?'

'About a hundred a year.'

'So you have dribbled away something like six pounds a week, and I daresay could not tell where the twentieth part of it went.'

'I am afraid I could account for a good deal of it,' said Alf Mostin good-naturedly.

'That would go for something,' retorted Mr. Doyle. 'I know by experience one might as well lay money on a sandbank as give it to you.'

'There is many a true word

spoken in jest,' agreed the 'ne'er-do-weel.'

'Jest!' repeated Mr. Doyle. 'If you think I am speaking in jest, I wonder what you would call earnest? But, however, that is neither here nor there. Mr. McCullagh, to revert to your matter, I must have time to think it over. I can't say I will help you, but neither do I say I will not. It is far too big a thing for me; but I shall see a gentleman to-day who might feel disposed to go in to it. Come here to-morrow afternoon. No, give me your address, and I will write to you.'

'By the bye,' he added, as Robert handed him a card, 'you came here to ask for my advice, did you not? That I can give you at once. Take your father's offer, and learn to save shillings. What! you don't like it, don't you? What you really want is help to take your own course. You are not singular. Most of the people I come in contact with desire nothing better than the loan of a few hundred or thousand pounds, as the case may be, to enable them to go to the devil. Now, never hereafter say I did not give you fair warning. Your father, I feel sure, is a most sensible gentleman; but I am afraid he has a very foolish son.'

With which genial remark, pleasantly and smilingly spoken, Mr. Doyle escorted his visitors across both the inner and outer offices, held the door open for them to pass out, and wished them a smiling 'Good-morning.'

'Well,' said Robert, as they walked through the alley leading into Suffolk-lane, 'what are the chances?'

'He'll do it,' answered Alf Mostin. 'I never knew him entertain a matter, and then drop

it. As a rule, he's a rare fellow at saying no.'

'Do you really think he knows any one who would advance seven thousand pounds?'

'He knows himself,' was the reply, somewhat roughly spoken. 'I tell you he means to let you have the money; but, Bob—'

'Yes, Alf.'

'Take a fool's advice, and go no further into this affair. Mischievous will come of it. I cannot tell you why, and I cannot tell you how; but I feel as sure evil must come of your going into Pousnetts' house as that I see that old graveyard now.'

'What has come to you?' asked his cousin.

'I do not know, only I am sorry I ever brought you and that old fox together. It does not signify to a man like myself, who has nothing to lose; but you have everything to lose, Bob. Promise me, do promise, that, let him write what he like, you will have nothing more to do with him.'

'Alf, you have gone crazy.'

'Have I? Well, time alone can show. Onlookers see most of the game, remember; and if Doyle has not a game of some sort on, I am greatly mistaken.'

'I do not care what game he has on, so long as he gets me seven thousand pounds by hook or by crook.'

'It will be by crook,' muttered Alf Mostin bitterly.

'So let it be,' said Robert McCullagh, stretching out his hand in farewell. 'Good-bye for the present. Mr. Pousnett will wonder what has become of me. I will be sure and let you know when I hear from Mr. Doyle.'

And he was gone.

HALF-HOURS WITH SOME OLD AMBASSADORS.

I.

SIR R. M. KEITH AND QUEEN CAROLINA MATILDA OF DENMARK.

DIPLOMACY may be defined as the science of international overreaching. Sometimes it is embellished with the *politesse* of a Talleyrand; sometimes it is enveloped in the secret machinations of a Machiavelli. But with regard to the science, as a whole, it has generally been assumed that its cardinal principle is never to say what you mean, and never to mean what you say. Much success has been known to ensue from a strict observance of this rule; but there have been solitary examples of equal good fortune witnessed in a departure from it. Lord Palmerston was a conspicuous instance of frankness in diplomacy; not always, perhaps, did he exhibit this quality; but he certainly did in many crises in European affairs, and his policy was regarded with incredulity in consequence. Statesmen and diplomatists found it difficult to believe that he had no *arrière-pensée* when he spoke freely upon State matters; and he frequently achieved success by his very boldness and frankness of speech. The same thing has been observable at certain stages in Prince Bismarck's career. The German Chancellor has often been represented as a deep, dark, and secret plotter against the welfare of European States; and no doubt he has once and again startled the world by some profound and unexpected piece of diplomacy; but, on the other hand, there has sometimes been an almost brutal openness in

the revelation of his projects, which has led to a feeling of deprecatory doubt, until such feeling has been removed by the accomplishment of the projects in question.

In diplomacy, however, it may safely be assumed that its most interesting ramifications are not those which come to the surface. Publicly, we are informed that such and such an agreement has been arrived at between two great Powers, or that such and such a treaty has been signed. The bald fact is all that is vouchsafed to us; and it is not until many years after the death of the negotiators concerned that we become acquainted with the secret history of the transactions. Now it is precisely in the hidden circumstances of these transactions that the deepest interest lies. We have, therefore, thought that it may be made a very interesting field of inquiry to trace, through the medium of memoirs and personal documents, some of those events of European significance and importance which have acquired a permanent place in history.

Few stories could be more entertaining and pathetic than that of Queen Carolina Matilda of Denmark, the sister of King George III. This story is inextricably interwoven with the career of a distinguished English diplomatist, Sir Robert Murray Keith, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the

Courts of Dresden, Copenhagen, and Vienna. He was intimately acquainted with the details of the episode of the revolution in Denmark in 1772, and to him, as the representative of Great Britain, is to be attributed the rescue of 'a daughter of England' from a threatened imprisonment for life in a northern fortress, viz. that of Kronborg, near Elsinore, the supposed site of Shakespeare's greatest tragedy. A Danish writer has observed that the later tragedy 'must awaken the sympathies of Englishmen, since Carolina Matilda was confined there, the victim of a foul and murderous Court intrigue.' An examination of the historical and political documents in the possession of the Earl of Hardwicke has revealed the fact that though the strictly official details of the Danish affair were found to have been withdrawn from the despatches, yet enough remained to attest fully the wrongs of the Princess, and the energy of her diplomatic defender. Some years ago, much of the correspondence of Sir R. M. Keith, and the story of Queen Carolina Matilda, were laid before the world in a very readable and attractive work by Mrs. Gillespie Smyth; and to this work, and that by Sir Lascelles Wrexall relating to the Queen of Denmark, we acknowledge with pleasure our indebtedness for many of the remarkable facts which we shall place before our readers in the course of the following narrative.

Keith appears to have been one of the frank school of diplomatists, and to have early acquired a reputation for probity, uprightness, and the most strict truthfulness. During his sojourn at the Court of Vienna, a striking tribute to the straightforwardness of his character was paid by the Prime Minister, Prince Kaunitz. An as-

sertion of Sir R. M. Keith's having excited a momentary feeling of incredulity in the breast of a listener, the Premier turned upon the latter with the remark: 'Were you not, sir, a stranger in Vienna, you would know that when Keith asserts, nobody presumes to doubt.' But to this frankness Keith united great firmness, energy, and circumspection—qualities which, in the earlier stages of his career, gained the commendation of Lord Chatham, and led to their possessor being subsequently known as the successful commander of that famous corps, 'Keith's Highlanders,' which took a conspicuous part in the Seven Years' War. It was not likely that such qualities could suffer eclipse after the time of active military service had expired; and, accordingly, Keith was speedily called upon to represent the Court of St. James's at that of Saxony, and afterwards was appointed Minister to Denmark.

The father of Sir R. M. Keith was also a very noticeable man. After filling the office of Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he was nominated to the Embassy at Vienna, where he was thrown into relations with that powerful and accomplished monarch, the Empress-Queen Maria Theresa. Mr. Keith's mission was a difficult and delicate one; but in the midst of most embarrassing circumstances he appears to have distinguished himself for his tact, forbearance, and courtesy. In 1762 the King of Prussia, with whom Mr. Keith had frequent communications, wrote to the latter as follows from Breslau: 'Your letter of the 9th of the month (May) gave me real pleasure; and I am the more obliged to you for the congratulations you address to me on the conclusion of my peace with the Emperor of Russia,

that I can only attribute the success of this negotiation to the zeal with which you exerted yourself to make it succeed. It is a work due to your efforts alone; and I shall cherish for it a gratitude proportioned to the important service which, on this occasion, you have rendered me.' This communication bears witness to the able diplomatic talents of Mr. Keith, and the powerful influence which he had obtained with some of the leading European Courts. During his stay at St. Petersburg, Mr. Keith addressed a letter to Mr. Grenville, in which he gave a vivid description of the successful attempt made early in July 1762 to dethrone the Emperor. The troops had mutinied, and Prince George of Holstein was made prisoner as he was attempting to leave the city. Mr. Keith states that one Orloff was commissioned to apprise the Empress of the revolution. 'Accordingly, as soon as she could get dressed, the Empress slipped out of the palace—some say by a back door, others by a window—without one single servant of either sex; and after several little accidents, such as horses tiring, &c., arrived in town about six o'clock, and went herself to the *caserne* of the Ismaeloffsky Guards, whom she found under arms with their colonel, the Hetman Rasomowsky, at their head, ready to receive her.' Here, briefly, is what followed: 'About eight o'clock the same evening, the Empress, on horseback, marched out of the town at the head of 9000, 10,000, or 12,000 men, with a great train of artillery, on the road to Peterhoff, in order to attack the Emperor, whether there or at Oranienbaum; and the next day, in the afternoon, we received intelligence of his Imperial Majesty having, without striking a stroke, sur-

rendered his person and resigned his crown.' This extraordinary and perfectly bloodless revolution was conceived and executed in rather less than two hours—an example which may be commended to the attention of all those nations with whom revolutions are so common. But we must pass on from Mr. Keith, whose career alone would furnish abundant materials for an article.

The son who was destined to follow in his footsteps, Robert Murray Keith, was born on the 20th of September 1730. Losing his mother when he was but eleven years of age, he was sent to school, first at Edinburgh, and then, in 1746, to London, where his principal studies consisted of riding the great horse, fencing, French, fortification, music, and drawing. Classical studies, however, were not neglected; and at a later period young Keith became perfectly conversant with French, Dutch, German, and Italian. In 1758 we find him at Munster with the British troops as Major Keith; and in the following year he was named to the command of the new Highland volunteers by Mr. Pitt. He joined the allied army in Germany under Prince Ferdinand in August 1759. The Highlanders fought with great intrepidity, and, in the language of the Prince of Brunswick, 'did wonders.' In the battle of Fellinghausen, in July 1761, they again rendered such conspicuous service as to draw forth a flattering mark of approbation from the commander-in-chief. The Highlanders had on this occasion resisted and repulsed the attacks of the chosen troops of France. Mr. Pitt once more took care of Colonel Keith after the war, and in 1769 he was appointed envoy to the Court of Saxony. Life at Dresden appears to have been all that was pleasant

and agreeable, and Keith's letters to his sister about this period show him to have become perfectly acclimatised to his new post. In the year 1771 Keith was removed to the Court of Denmark. While ready to serve his king, who might command his services, he said, to the utmost verge of the globe, it was with great reluctance that the young diplomatist learnt of his removal from Dresden; yet the mission to Denmark was much more important and honourable, and it was destined to bring such reward and renown as he could never have achieved in Saxony. Before settling down at Copenhagen, he paid visits to Vienna and Berlin, where he was received with distinguished favour by the sovereigns of Austria and Prussia, and introduced to many of the distinguished men in both capitals. Shortly after his arrival at the Danish capital, Keith wrote to his father as follows: 'Copenhagen is by far a finer city than I had figured to myself, or had a right to expect, from the other Danish towns I had seen upon the road. The streets are broad, the openings and squares spacious, and the palace, as well as several of the public buildings, magnificent. The street in which my house stands leads to the new square, which is composed of palaces, built uniformly, and embellished by the famous equestrian statue of the late king, which is, in all probability, the finest in Europe. It is perfectly finished, but not yet uncovered; and you will hardly believe that the statue and its ornaments alone could have cost 120,000*l.*, which I am assured is true. I have hired Mr. Gunning's house; and the impossibility of finding a furnished one here made it absolutely necessary for me to purchase his furniture, for which I paid him two days

ago, 512*l.*! From this one ruinous article you may judge of the rest, and of the fair claim I had to additional emolument upon being nominated to this commission, which it never entered into my brain to solicit. Climate, comfort, society, all against me—the ruin of my fortune into the bargain would be too hard. My first audiences are over, and now my business must be to deserve the public and private esteem, and then I shall be prepared for whatever circumstances occur. One of great moment, and for which we are daily looking, is the Queen's confinement, which has already passed its allotted period.' The child here referred to proved to be a daughter, the Princess of Holstein-Augustenburg, and mother to the late Queen of Denmark. With the above glimpse of Copenhagen a century ago we come to a pause in our narrative.

Place aux dames! Having traced the career of Colonel Keith to his settlement at that Court where he was to reap his greatest diplomatic laurels, we now come to the history of that unfortunate Queen who drew forth the sympathies of more than one people, and whose misfortunes it was the happy lot of the British envoy to alleviate. But four-and-twenty years of life that amiable and lovely Princess was fated to enjoy. In how many cases has Shakespeare's immortal line proved true, 'Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown'! There is not a dynasty in Europe whose records do not furnish examples of this. The Hanoverian has been no exception to the rule; and it has been pointed out that, at the very same age as that at which Carolina Matilda of Denmark died, the gates of a neighbouring fortress had closed, scarcely less effectually on her injured great-grand-

mother, Sophia Dorothea, consort of George I. The Princess, with whose romantic history we are now concerned, was the posthumous child of the Prince of Wales, eldest son of George II., and consequently sister to George III. Born on the 22d of July 1751, or rather more than four months after the death of her father, she was christened Carolina Matilda. She was destined to no common sorrows and troubles; yet 'from her tenderest years,' says Mrs. Gillespie Smyth, 'this amiable Princess displayed the most endearing vivacity, and a sweetness of temper which secured to her the affection of her attendants. And, as she approached a maturer period, her heart and mind became susceptible of the most generous sentiments, and of a cultivation which fitted her to shine in the loftiest sphere with reputation and dignity. Her education reflects the greatest credit on her able surviving parent. She was well read in modern history, conversant with geography, spoke with correctness, eloquence, and fluency both German and French, and understood Latin. Her diction in English was pure, and her elocution graceful. She could with facility repeat the finest passages from our dramatic poets; and often rehearsed, with great judgment and propriety, whole scenes from Shakespeare's most admired plays.' In person she is represented as being somewhat above the middle size, well shaped, but with a slight tendency to *embonpoint*. Oval face, arched eyebrows, sweet and beautiful eyes, alabaster teeth, coral lips, a good complexion, and light-chestnut hair—such are the physical perfections accorded to her; while her voice was sweet and melodious, and her aspect rather gracious and majestic. Altogether, she was of most prepos-

sessing appearance and manners. In disposition she was very affable and generous, and much is recorded of her liberality and beneficence to the poor; for whom, indeed, she constantly gave the benefit of her own exertions. At a very early age she was asked in marriage by the young King of Denmark, Christian VII., who is described as a young man of many graces, both of mind and person. Singular to say, however, the Princess felt from the earliest moment no joyful sensations when she contemplated the approaching union; and there must have been some secret repulsion to have caused this feeling. After the announcement of the alliance, while not losing much of her old charm to her immediate friends, she became pensive, reserved, and disquieted. But the difficult and perilous situation of the young monarch of Denmark must be remembered in mitigation of the censure which is cast upon him. At a very early age he was thrown under the nefarious influence of the second wife of his father, Frederick V. This King was completely infatuated by his second spouse, and after his death the consequences of this infatuation began to manifest themselves. 'The Dowager Queen, Juliana Maria,' remarks a contemporary writer, 'even before the King had closed his eyes, planned the bold and iniquitous scheme of snatching the sceptre from the feeble hands of Christian VII., whose youth and timidity forwarded the evil designs of this artful princess. She had often, it is said, even during the lifetime of Frederick V., displayed, in his absence, her ill-will towards the Prince Royal, he being the sole obstacle to her son Frederick's mounting the throne, to which she was passionately desirous of raising him.' The young

King, her stepson, after his accession, 'never testified his firmness, or had the courage to defend his own opinion, on any other occasion than in the choice of Carolina Matilda of England; whilst the Queen Dowager neither approved of the alliance, nor of the time fixed for the union.' The marriage, notwithstanding, was solemnised in due course at the Chapel Royal, St. James's, on the 1st of October 1766. The young Princess wept on leaving her native land; but well had it been that she had never known subsequently bitterer tears than those which she shed on parting with all that was dear to her in England. Queen Matilda's first appearance at Copenhagen, with all her advantages of youth and beauty, and the warm acclamations of a delighted people, added fuel to the flames of jealousy which burnt in the breast of the Queen Dowager. This of itself made the position of the young Queen a difficult one to fill; but there was speedily to add to it the trouble which sprang from the conduct of her husband. Yet, 'notwithstanding the vices of her husband, as he had a large fund of good-nature and generosity, she might have avoided the calamities that too soon overtook her, had it not been for the insinuations of conflicting nobles emulous for power, and the ceaseless intrigues of Juliana Maria.' The latter's rage and dismay culminated on the 28th of January 1768, when the artillery of the forts and fleets of Zealand proclaimed the safe delivery of the young Queen and the birth of a male child. This event formed a serious bar to the chances of her own son's accession to the throne. Driven to desperation, the scheming woman now began to work upon the King, surrounding him with worthless friends and associates. In 1768

the King of Denmark paid visits to London and Paris, where he lived in the most profuse and voluptuous manner. His stay in the latter city specially appears to have so worked upon his weak and dissolute mind, that he regarded with aversion his return to his native country. Before arriving at Copenhagen he had become unjustly prejudiced against his consort, and, instead of testifying his joy and fondness at their first meeting, he sought to mortify her by his coolness and indifference. The intriguing Queen Dowager still further incensed him by her insinuations that the Queen had connections that were too close with some of her favourites. With other false and specious speeches she congratulated him upon his return.

Yet what were the facts? It has been shown on indisputable authority that, during the absence of her husband, Carolina resided principally at the palace of Fredericksborg, where her conduct was free from reproach. She had no ambition for political power, and when pressed to join this or that faction, steadfastly declined. Her child and the nurses slept in the Royal apartment, and the Queen's life was of the most retired description. But the day of severe trial was rapidly approaching. The Prime Minister of Christian VII. was the notorious Count Struensee, who, born in obscurity in Holstein in the year 1737, rapidly advanced to the high position he afterwards held. Against the too stringent training of his youth Struensee in after life revolted, becoming wild and profligate. Accompanying the King to London and Paris, in the latter city he became acquainted with Count Brandt, a Dane of good family. Brandt had been a favourite of Christian

VII., but was supplanted by one Count Holke. Struensee appears to have promised Brandt that if, on his return to Denmark, he should acquire sufficient credit at Court, he would use it to obtain the recall of his friend. After the King's return home, Struensee was treated with marked favour. He was introduced to the Queen and created a Privy Councillor. The King and his consort, who had ceased to live together, were eventually reconciled by Struensee, and the Count, in consequence, received from both every mark of consideration and regard. Brandt was recalled from exile, and in a short time Struensee wielded almost absolute power as First Minister. Struensee showed himself to be a man capable of vigorous action, and though many of his measures brought upon him great odium and unpopularity, there were others initiated by him of a really wise and progressive character. Unfortunately, however, 'profligacy and ambition were the rocks on which he split. In a Court immersed in dissipation and criminal pleasures of every kind, he stood forth the avowed patron and guilty partaker of every fashionable vice. At masked balls, and other foreign amusements of that kind, then first introduced into the Danish metropolis, he was the gay leader and infatuated promoter of whatever tended to foster or encourage the dark artifices of gallantry and intrigue.' Towards the end of his career, he exhibited a remarkable absence of vigilance and sagacity, perhaps the most essential requisites in one of his high position, when his enemies had become both numerous and powerful. Struensee's friendly relations with the Queen speedily began to be commented upon, and her Majesty herself aggravated popular rumour

by frequently riding out in company with the Minister. There was introduced at this time into Denmark a riding-habit of somewhat masculine appearance, and the Queen's indiscreet adoption of this habit did her no good with the populace. But there was not one of her subjects who charged her with worse indiscretions than these, or really believed in his heart that she was guilty of them. An old Court Chamberlain, indeed, pointing to her portrait some years after her death, exclaimed, 'That was an angel!'

The almost despotic power of Struensee was at length found to be too galling to be borne by many of the Danish nobles. Amongst these was Count Rantzau, who, after using the Premier as a spy in the past, was fated to be the chief instrument in compassing his downfall. Rantzau had in earlier life assisted in the revolution which placed Catherine of Russia on the throne. He had subsequently become the intimate friend of Frederick V. of Denmark, to whom he gave an assurance that he would never desert his son Christian. While Struensee was at the height of his power, an opportunity offered to Rantzau to work upon the feelings of the King. It is said that when Christian was staying at the Count's mansion, Rantzau gazed on the debilitated being before him with looks fraught with more meaning than words, and a tear trickled down his furrowed cheek. The King was affected, and for a moment the old vivacity returned to his lack-lustre eye. Seizing the Count by the hand, he said, 'You were a true friend to my father; you will never be an enemy to me?' 'Never, sire; never will I hesitate to sacrifice my life in your defence!' As he

spoke, the Count fell upon one knee, and drawing an antique ring from his finger, he put it on the King's, adding in solemn tones, 'This ring, sire, was given me by your Royal father when I returned from Russia, and when, by fortunate exertions there, I was the humble means of averting invasion from his kingdom. If ever your Majesty thinks yourself in danger, and you want the assistance of Rantzau, send this ring to me, and I will fly on the wings of affection and loyalty to your aid.' But the monarch speedily relapsed into his former, and now normal and pitiable, condition of semi-idiotcy.

Meanwhile, Struensee was tottering to his fall. Scandalous rumours gained currency as to his share in ministering to the King's passions, thus undermining his health; and the name of the Queen also came in for its share of obloquy on other grounds. Her indiscretion in favouring a corrupt Minister (perhaps to be accounted for chiefly from the fact that she was grateful to him for reconciling the King and herself) was animadverted upon; and it now became evident that the impending catastrophe could not long be delayed. Colonel Keith seems to have been fully aware of Count Struensee's danger, for in a Danish work, by Dr. Høst, occurs this passage concerning Keith: 'This sensible and worthy man could not but be uneasy as to the influence which the danger that hovered over Struensee might have on the destiny of the Queen. He urged the Count to remove from the Court; but the latter, although aware of the danger, could not tear himself away.' Now Keith himself had always been anxious not to be mixed up in Court intrigues; and in writing to his father shortly after his arri-

val at Copenhagen, he said: 'The first step to render my mission useful to the King's service is to establish my reputation as a man who is above all trick or low intrigue, and who will never interfere when he can do no good.' So that we may be quite sure any steps he subsequently took were in no way prompted by a desire to meddle in these delicate affairs, but solely from a strong desire to act for the best. From the profligate clique of the Minister he held himself entirely aloof. In a sketch of Struensee penned by Colonel Keith, the writer thus rapidly traces the Count's singular rise to power: 'I have reason to believe, how odd soever it may appear, that from his first admittance into the palace he laid his plan to be Prime Minister. He began by governing all those of his own sphere, and rendering himself necessary to those of a higher. He was first made *Lecteur du Roi*, and a sort of *Sécrétaire du Cabinet*; then, on the return from England, *Maître des Requêtes* (an office which meant anything or everything); and soon after he called to his assistance the amiable and striking figures I have just now painted, viz. Rantzau, Gähler, and Brandt. He dismissed Count Bernstorff, Rosencrantz, Moltke, Thott—in short every Minister and great officer of the Crown. He acquired an irresistible ascendancy over the throne; he made himself *Chevalier de Mathilde* and Count of Denmark; and having abolished all Ministry and Council, he took to himself the exclusive title of *Ministre du Cabinet*; Finances, Army, Navy, *Collèges et Cuisines*, every branch of power or prerogative rested in him. To consummate all, he procured and published a Royal sign-manual, declaring that whatever orders were given

by Count Struensee to the heads or subalterns of every board or department of Government should be obeyed instantly, implicitly, and without appeal.' Sir Lascelles Wraxall, in his work on the *Life and Times of Carolina Matilda*, affirms that Sir R. M. Keith was strongly prejudiced against Struensee. The British Envoy, he says, after expressing his dissatisfaction at remaining at his post, when he was prohibited from mixing himself up in the internal administration, adds, 'If I am ordered to grapple with these gentry, I already feel (thank God) the superiority which honesty has over low cunning. I am sure, if I had *carte blanche*, I could already have dismissed half a dozen of the most worthless fellows alive.' Sir Lascelles Wraxall has, we think, done some injustice to Keith, and mistaken his character in one respect. We have seen the depth of the British Envoy's loyalty to his sovereign; and if he was prejudiced against Struensee, it was only the natural and indignant prejudice which a man feels against triumphant vice—a feeling which does him credit. Moreover, he already experienced serious forebodings that the condition of affairs at the Danish Court would result disastrously to the sister of the monarch whom he faithfully served.

A suggestion made by Brandt to Struensee that the Queen Dowager should be arrested and banished was unfortunately rejected by Struensee. The partisans of Juliana Maria now began to plot actively. Queen Matilda having signified her intention of being present at the usual Court festivities on the 1st of January 1772, her opponents, who had gained over a portion of the soldiery, resolved to break in among the crowd, to seize upon the Queen's friends,

and even to put them to death if resistance were attempted. An anonymous warning sent to a nobleman in the Queen's household prevented the execution of this scheme. The Queen kept away from the festivities on the plea of indisposition. But another opportunity was afforded to the conspirators by a masked ball, which was given in the Royal palace on the 16th of January. Sir Nathaniel Wraxall has furnished a graphic sketch of the incidents which occurred at this ball. Rantau was to persuade the King to sign an order for the arrest of the Queen and her friends, while to Köller Banner was assigned the important task of arresting Struensee. Rantau, however, resolved to betray the conspirators; but in this was prevented by the energy of Colonel von Köller. The plan was successfully carried out; and after the ball, which terminated at three o'clock, Struensee was arrested in his luxurious and magnificent apartments by Colonel von Köller. He and Brandt were conveyed to prison under the King's warrant. 'Struensee, accompanied by officers with drawn swords and loaded pistols, was put into the first of two coaches which stood at the door, and conveyed to the citadel. Here the prisoners were at first confined in a room belonging to the officers, two of whom, relieved every two hours, were constantly inside, and two sentinels outside, the door. During their progress to the citadel Struensee is said to have testified the deepest despondency, while his more energetic comrade, Count Brandt, whose ineffectual resistance at the time of his arrest, and dauntless conduct on the scaffold, attested his nobler origin as well as courageous temper, displayed the intrepidity which never for-

sook him. On arriving at the citadel, and when Count Struensee was delivered as a State prisoner to the commandant, the former said, in a mournful voice, "I suppose this visit is totally unexpected by you!" "Not at all," replied the uncourteous commandant. "I have been, for a long time past, constantly expecting your excellency." With this ungracious welcome the King's favourite exchanged the palace for the prison.

But we now turn to the arrest of a more august personage, Queen Carolina Matilda. It seems that about five o'clock in the morning she was awakened by a Danish female attendant, who always lay in the adjoining room. The attendant held out a paper to her Majesty, which, with marks of agitation, she requested her mistress to peruse. It proved to be a request, couched in brief but respectful terms, to the effect that the King of Denmark, for reasons of a private nature, wished her to remove to one of the Royal palaces in the country for a few days. The Queen immediately understood her misfortune and the imminence of her danger. 'Conscious that, if she could only gain access to the King, she could in a moment overturn the plans of her enemies, she sprang out of bed, and, without waiting to put on anything except a petticoat and shoes, she rushed into the antechamber. There the first object which she met was Count Rantzau, seated quietly in a chair. Recollecting then her dishevelled state, she cried out, "*Eloignez-vous, Monsieur le Comte, pour l'amour de Dieu, car je ne suis pas présentable!*" She immediately ran back into her chamber, and hastily threw on some clothes, assisted by her women. On attempting a second time to leave her room, she found that Rantzau

had withdrawn himself, but had stationed an officer in the doorway, who opposed her further passage. Rendered almost frantic by this insult added to her distress, she seized him by the hair, demanding to see Count Struensee or the King. "Madam," said he, "I only do my duty and obey my orders. There is no Count Struensee now, nor can your Majesty see the King." Having pushed him aside, she advanced to the door of the antechamber, where two soldiers had crossed their firelocks in order to stop her progress. The Queen commanded them to let her pass, and added promises of reward if they obeyed. Both the soldiers fell on their knees, and one of them said in Danish, "It is a sad duty, but we must perform it. Our heads are answerable if we allow your Majesty to pass." As no man, however, dared to lay hands upon the Queen, she stepped over the muskets, which were crossed, and ran half wild along the corridor to the King's apartment. She even forced her way into it by violence; but her enemies, aware that she might try to gain admittance, and justly apprehensive of her influence over him, had taken the precaution of removing him betimes to another part of the palace.'

Sir L. Wraxall gives a different version of the arrest from this, though both accounts are substantially the same. The following is what passed, according to Wraxall, after Rantzau's attitude towards the Queen had assumed a menacing character:

"*Villain!*" the impassioned Queen cried to him, "is that the language of a servant to a monarch? Go, most contemptible of men! Go, you are loaded with shame and disgrace; but I am not afraid of you!"

'These words from the dauntless young Queen infuriated the haughty Rantzau; but he did not dare to carry out his ruffianly orders by seizing the brave Princess; hence he gave his comrades an imperious glance to interfere. The boldest of the three advanced and seized the Queen round the waist; but she tore herself away from him, shrieked for assistance as loudly as she could, and hastened along the passage to the secret stairs; but her women held her back, and said,

"Your Majesty cannot pass out; for all the doors are guarded by sentries, and no one will listen to your cry for help."

'Left alone with four armed soldiers, and rendered desperate by anger and shame, the unfortunate Princess rushed to a window, tore it open, and was about to hurl herself out; but an officer seized her round the waist and held her back by force. Beside herself with passion, she seized the impudent man by the hair and struggled with him alone, when another of the officers had to assist his comrade against a defenceless woman. She resisted him as well, and, though half naked, continued the struggle with the courage of despair, till she at length fell back in a fainting state. Rantzau watched this scene with great gusto; and when the women brought their mistress round again, he ordered them to conduct her into an adjoining room and dress her, while he sent for Count von der Osten, who might induce her to yield.'

Being perfectly exhausted, the Queen offered no further resistance. She was informed that she must instantly quit Copenhagen; and after some difficulty she was got into a coach with her ladies and a major in the Danish service. Her little daughter fol-

lowed in a second carriage. The vehicles drove off to Kronborg, in which fortress the unhappy woman was confined. 'There was immured,' observes a contemporary writer, 'in the gloomy mansions of guilt and horror, a Queen, whose personal charms and mental accomplishments would have melted into compassion the heart of a ruffian. In this inhospitable fortress she had not even been permitted to have the necessary clothes to prepare herself against the severity of the weather in this frozen region; nor was she indulged with more conveniences in her apartments than those granted to criminals of the lowest station, but treated with the greatest indignity by her unfeeling keepers and an insolent soldiery.'

It is stated that on reaching the fortress of Kronborg, the Queen was so exhausted that she was carried up to a sleeping-apartment. On seeing the couch, however, she shrieked: 'Away! away from here! There is no rest for the miserable, no rest for me any more!' She at last found relief in tears; for which she thanked God as the only consolation of which her enemies could not deprive her. Then, hearing her daughter's voice, she flew to her. 'You, too, here! Dear innocent creature! O, in that case your poor mother is not utterly wretched.' She clasped the child warmly to her breast. Two days elapsed before the Queen would touch food, or lie down upon the bed; but afterwards she began to regain calmness and patience.

Trials still harder to bear followed. The populace were incited against the Queen by paid wretches, who shouted, 'Justice against Matilda!' and '*Vivat Regina Juliana!*' the latter cry of course referring to the Queen's deadliest enemy. Prince Frede-

rick, the Queen Dowager's son, was even spoken of as the *hereditary* prince. The State Council, composed almost exclusively of those who had conspired against the Queen, 'declared her, without any form of trial, guilty of adultery, and of being privy to the poison administered to her husband; and would probably have passed upon her Majesty a most iniquitous sentence, if Mr. Keith, the English Minister, had not solemnly protested against all acts of violence with which the person of the Queen seemed to be threatened. He bravely vindicated oppressed innocence in a manner worthy of his character, refuted with much energy her accusers, and concluded with denouncing the vengeance of his nation, and the bombardment of Copenhagen, if justice were not done to the sister of his sovereign.' These strong representations had a salutary effect, and suspended the immediate effect of a hasty and precipitate judgment.

The Queen wrote as follows during her captivity to Sir R. M. Keith: 'From the first day of my iniquitous arrest and severe captivity, I foresaw that the rage of my enemies would insist on the loss of my liberty and my life. I am perfectly resigned to my fate either way; but the thought of my reputation being tarnished, and my dear children abandoned to the mercy of a people unjustly prejudiced against the legitimacy of their birth, overwhelms me with the most pungent grief. Has the King my brother, then, abandoned me? Great God! Will no one, then, avenge my innocence and my memory? And then she makes a fervent appeal to the Envoy for help. This is not the language of a guilty woman; and yet shortly afterwards, by dint of a most unworthy

stratagem, and when in an irresponsible condition, she was induced to sign a confession which there is no reason whatever now to doubt was entirely false. Sir R. M. Keith appealed to his sovereign at home, and by way of reply there came the Order of the Bath, the insignia having been enclosed with the King's own hands. Lord Suffolk, the Foreign Secretary, writing to the elder Mr. Keith, congratulated him upon the eminent merits of his son, and added: 'His Majesty has directed me to inform Sir R. Keith that he chose the time *previous* to the issue of his negotiation, on purpose to distinguish his merit, independent of his success; and he has been pleased to signify that the whole is to be considered as his act, and that Sir R. Keith is not to inquire into the expenses of the present his Majesty has made.' No favour by a monarch could have been more flatteringly conferred. The situation which Sir R. M. Keith occupied at this juncture was undoubtedly a very difficult one; but in commenting upon it he himself well observed that the man 'who has done his best and despises Fortune may sleep in quiet.' The untoward fate of Carolina Matilda hastened the end of the Princess Dowager of England, who, until within a few moments of her death, had given no tokens of so sad an event. Her daughter's pitiable case had moved her greatly; and some hours after bidding the King good-night with greater affection than usual, she suddenly laid her hand upon her heart, and expired without a groan.

The trial of the two Counts came on in due course, and both were found guilty, according to universal expectation. Count Struensee was pronounced guilty of having embezzled from the

King's coffers a large sum of gold equal to 125,000*l.* sterling; of having expedited many orders from the Cabinet without the King's knowledge; of an unbecoming familiarity with the Queen; of having secreted several letters which should have been laid before the King; of having counselled the King to disband his guards; of forging and falsifying a draft; and of suspicious arrangements in the city. Count Brandt was found guilty of having been privy to Struensee's free intercourse with the Queen and all his other supposed crimes, without divulging them; of having laid violent hands upon the King's person; and also of evil designs against his Majesty. These accusations, which were equivalent to high treason, were punishable by the Danish law with forfeiture, confiscation, and death. Consequently Struensee's sentence ran as follows: 'John Frederick Struensee has (agreeable to the Danish statute-law, book vi. chapter iv. article 1) for his crimes forfeited his honour, estate, and life. His coat-of-arms shall be broken by the common executioner. His right hand shall be cut off, and afterwards his head; his body shall be quartered, and exposed on a wheel; his head and hand to be placed on a pole, and fixed over the gates.' A similar sentence was passed on Count Ernevoldt Brandt. It is said that during their imprisonment both criminals were brought to confess the wickedness and folly of their past lives, through the exertions of two worthy pastors; that both acknowledged to a contrite sense of guilt before God, and earnestly prayed for forgiveness. A long and circumstantial account in connection with Struensee's conversion was subsequently published. The former

Minister and his associate were executed before the east gate of the city of Copenhagen, in the centre of a field, on a scaffold erected for that purpose. Brandt behaved with unparalleled coolness while his hand was cut off, and went through the rest of his sentence with amazing intrepidity. Struensee appears to have had a strong natural dread of death; and when his hand was cut off previous to his execution, his whole body fell into convulsions.

Meantime the trial of the Queen proceeded. It is, indeed, truly astonishing that, in regard to this iniquitous prosecution, according to one writer, the King, 'so far from accusing her of infidelity, and other crimes still more atrocious, declared more than once that she was worthy of a husband more disposed than himself to do justice to her charms and virtues; while the generous avowal of his excesses and irregularities justified the indifference and disgust she had long cherished towards him. If she could, during her confinement, have obtained an interview with him, it is not to be doubted that her Majesty would have compelled him to have made her due reparation for the injuries she had received. The Dowager, however, constantly prevented all intercourse between them, being certain that the Queen would have recovered her liberty, and made her enemies repent of their injustice, had she been confronted with the King.' As all the accusations against the Queen were false, the nefarious plan of having her degraded and punished with death, and her children declared illegitimate, proved abortive. The Dowager, in consideration of these facts, and dreading the just anger of the King of Great Britain, was fain to yield to the commutation of the Queen's in-

tended sentence to perpetual imprisonment at the extremity of the frozen deserts of Jutland. Thanks to the energetic efforts of Sir Robert Keith, however, the regency of Denmark was at length compelled to deliver up the Queen to the English representative, who was appointed to accompany her into the Electorate of Hanover, where the castle of Zell had been allotted her by her Royal brother for her residence. Sir Robert Keith also obtained a pension of 5000*l.* per annum towards the support of her Majesty's household and dignity; and thus all idea of hostility between Great Britain and Denmark subsided. That we were prepared to take strong measures, however, was made quite evident.

After the departure of Carolina Matilda, the Queen Dowager found that the control of State affairs was not so easy and pleasant as she had imagined. This scheming woman was compelled always to be on the *qui vive* to quell all sentiments favourable to the deposed Princess, and she was obliged also to use the utmost assiduity in maintaining her influence over the King. Banished from Court, the young Queen solaced herself in retirement with her children, to whom she was passionately attached. Her strong affection for them had more than once attracted the admiration of Sir R. M. Keith. At Zell she indulged those literary tastes which were ever dear to her, and which formed now an additional solace. At last a project was conceived for restoring her to the throne of Denmark. She was visited by Mr. N. Wraxall, who communicated to her the details of this project, and with him she held several important conversations, and laid down plans for further proceedings. The enterprise made great pro-

gress; it was one in which some of the first nobility of Denmark, Norway, and Holstein were engaged, and King George III. gave his consent to it. The sudden death of the Queen herself prevented the fruition of the newly-built hopes. Having momentarily gazed at the corpse of one of her pages, who had died of scarlet fever, on the following day her Majesty complained to her bed-chamber woman that the image of the dead page had appeared to her all through the night and filled her with terror. On the third day after this she was taken seriously ill, and she told her physician that she was sure her indisposition was beyond the reach of medicine. On the 11th of May 1775, she expired, being then in her twenty-fourth year only. Pastor Lehzen, who saw her die, stated that he never witnessed so easy a dissolution. There were rumours that the Queen had been poisoned, but there is no doubt that these suspicions were groundless.

Thus perished this beautiful and unfortunate Princess; and if further proof of her innocence were required (though happily that does not need establishing), it would be found in a letter which the Queen herself wrote, not long before her death, to her brother, King George III., and whose authenticity Sir L. Wraxall regards as incontestable. This remarkable and pathetic document runs as follows:

‘Sire,—In the most solemn hour of my life I turn to you, my Royal brother, to express my heart's thanks for all the kindness you have shown me during my whole life, and especially in my misfortune.

‘I die willingly; for nothing holds me back—neither my youth

nor the pleasures which might await me, near or remote. How could life possess any charms for me, who am separated from all those I love—my husband, my children, and my relatives? I, who am myself a Queen and of Royal blood, have lived the most wretched life, and stand before the world an example that neither crown nor sceptre affords any protection against misfortune.

‘But I die innocent. I write this with a trembling hand, and feeling death imminent—I am innocent! O, that it might please the Almighty to convince the world after my death that I did not deserve any of the frightful accusations by which the calumnies of my enemies stained my character, wounded my heart, traduced my honour, and trampled upon my dignity!’

‘Sire, believe your dying sister, a Queen, and, even more, a Christian, who would gaze with terror on the other world if her last confession were a falsehood. I die willingly; for the unhappy bless the tomb.’

‘But more than all else, and even than death, it pains me that not one of all those whom I loved in life is standing by my dying bed, to grant me a last consolation by a pressure of the hand or a glance of compassion, and to close my eyes in death.’

‘Still, I am not alone. God, the sole witness of my innocence, is looking down on my bed of agony, which causes me such sufferings. My guardian angel is hovering over me, and will soon guide me to the spot where I shall be able to pray for my friends, and also for my persecutors.’

‘Farewell, then, my Royal brother! May Heaven bless you, my husband, my children, England, Denmark, and the whole world! Permit my corpse to rest in the

grave of my ancestors. And now the last unspeakably long farewell from your unfortunate

‘CAROLINE MATILDA.’

Sir Lascelles Wrexall says that this letter reached him through the Ducheess of Augustenburg, who was allowed to take a copy by the late King of Hanover. The Queen’s supreme wish—the vindication of her character—has been abundantly fulfilled. There is other striking proof of her innocence. M. Roques, pastor of the French Protestant church in Zell, who was frequently summoned into the presence of the Queen, stated that after reciting the prayers for the dying, just before the Princess breathed her last breath, she turned to him and said: ‘M. Roques, I am about to appear before God. I protest that I am innocent of the crimes imputed against me, and that I was never faithless to my husband.’

Here should close our sad and tragic story, and we will only delay the end for a moment by referring to the reaction in her favour which followed upon the Queen’s death. The conspirators now began to conspire against each other, and intrigues at the Danish Court were the order of the day. The infamous plotters in course of time one by one received their deserts, and the ascendancy of Juliana Maria and her son was utterly overthrown by the Crown Prince. On being deposed, the Queen Dowager waxed furious; but her rage and fury somewhat subsided under the threat of arrest and imprisonment. ‘When the fire of 1794 completely destroyed the splendid Christiansborg Palace, the two Royal conspirators against Struensee and Caroline Matilda were left without a roof in the capital,

and were obliged to seek shelter with private persons until their future abode was prepared for them in the Amalienborg Palace. Here mother and son lived quietly till their death: the former engaged with penances, for which her crimes against her own daughter-in-law and an innocent Minister were sufficient reason; the latter, more honourably, in promoting the arts and sciences, for which the appanage of 12,000 dollars, granted him on the exchange of territory for resigning the coadjutorship of the principality of Lübeck, afforded him the means.' By his consort, a Princess of Mecklenburg, he had two sons and two daughters—the younger of the latter being the grandmother of the beautiful and much-beloved Alexandra, Princess of Wales.

Of Queen Carolina Matilda's champion, Sir Robert Murray Keith, something also still remains to be said. His conduct at the Danish Court rendered him exceedingly popular amongst his English friends, and the letters from distinguished men with which his correspondence abounds fully show the esteem in which he was held by others of his contemporaries. His public career may be very briefly stated. He was placed in the diplomatic career by Marshal Conway, when Secretary of State. After holding other appointments, as we have seen, he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to the Court of Vienna; and his brother Sir Basil (in whose fortunes he had always taken the keenest interest) was appointed Governor of Jamaica. Sir Robert, who was made a Privy Councillor, was

lieutenant-general in the army and colonel of the 10th regiment of foot. He resigned his post at Vienna in the year 1792, and returned to England; but only lived to enjoy his well-merited retirement for three years. 'Unsophisticated in character by a sojourn in Courts, unchilled in heart by sixty-five years' intercourse with the world, unbroken in spirits by the long yoke of political servitude, it was almost in the exercise of cheerful hospitality that the life of this great and good man found a characteristic conclusion. A few intimate friends (among others, Baron Jacobi, the Prussian Minister in London, with whom he had formed a peculiar friendship while filling a situation at Vienna) had dined with Sir R. M. Keith at a villa he then occupied near Hammersmith; after seeing them to their carriages, he was struck down on his threshold with an instantaneous and fatal effusion of water on the chest, and died lamented, as he had lived beloved, on the 7th of July 1795.' By way of accounting for his sudden death, it was stated in the journals of the day that Sir Robert was corpulent in body, and had a very short neck. It was added, moreover, that his father died almost as suddenly.

Sir Robert Murray Keith rendered many important diplomatic services to his country; but there is no episode in the career of this distinguished diplomatist which sheds such lustre upon his name as his championship, in a moment of extreme peril, of that hapless Princess of England who afterwards became Queen Carolina Matilda of Denmark.

AN ENTR'ACTE.

'APARTMENTS to let! I wonder if they would do?'

He who thus pondered was standing in the middle of the road, which a quarter of a mile further on became the High-street of Penmouth, a town on the western coast.

He was staring meditatively at a long white gate, on which was fastened a board, bearing the above-quoted inscription. The gate was set between a high hedge, white with hawthorn bloom; above it the laburnums shook their golden locks; and beyond it was a winding path, leading down between shrubberies to a house which, however, could not be seen from the road.

'I might as well try,' was the conclusion arrived at by the individual before the gate; and, lifting the latch, he swung the wicket backward and entered the garden.

The path led downward between thickly-set syringas, already showing their flower-buds, and the dark-green arbutus and laurestinus. A sharp turn brought him suddenly in front of the house—a long rambling building of gray stone, which looked rather surprised at the neglected state of itself and its grounds, and sulky at the degrading announcement, again put forth in a front window, of there being 'Apartments to let.'

'What a nice old place!' thought the stranger, as he rang at the front door, and the rusty bell-wire creaked in orthodox romance fashion. 'I wonder what has made it come down in the world?'

Romance, however, was dispelled by the appearance of the lady who opened the door—a stout red-faced dame of fifty, her countenance framed by tight rolls of dark hair and a miraculous cap.

The gentleman had come after the lodgings. How many rooms would he want? A bedroom and sitting-room, she supposed. As a rule, she preferred letting to families; but as this was not the busy time of the year, and as they had let part of the rooms to a lady, and as—Would the gentleman follow her? And Mrs. Watkins, mistress of old Horneck Manor-house, led the way up-stairs, quite trembling with secret eagerness to secure a second lodger at a time of year when visitors to Penmouth were rare.

'You have a large old house,' said the stranger, as he followed her along the hall up the wide staircase, and noted the quaint carving over the doors, the delicate moulding of the cornices.

'Yes, sir; we don't live on this side of the house at all ourselves. There's plenty of room for me and my master and the children on the other side, which used to be the servants' part in the old times. You don't know Penmouth, sir? This used to be Horneck Manor, and the lords of the manor used to have rights over the whole of Penmouth. But the people it belonged to went to rack and ruin, and so did the place.'

'How?'

'Mines and drink,' replied Mrs.

Watkins tersely. 'We shouldn't have taken the house; but my husband he wanted to farm the land, and as we couldn't have it without the house, we thought we'd do the best we could by letting the rooms.'

Her possible lodger could easily imagine this best to be not at all bad. The old house was by no means in good repair, and even a person not much learned in the value of house property could guess that a rather tumble-down dwelling in the extreme west of England, three hundred miles from London, did not command a very exorbitant rent.

Still, Horneck House was a singularly perfect specimen of its class. It had been built in 1603, as was still registered in stone over the back door, and had never been spoilt by additions. Poor old house, it was sadly maltreated now with green-glass lustres surmounting the delicate grace of the carved-wood mantelpieces, and the walls of the staircase embellished by a many-coloured wallpaper, displaying, in a series of blotched scenes, the drama of domestic life in China.

Despite of this, the rooms that were to let took the visitor's fancy greatly. The sitting-room was on the first floor, and from the window could be seen in the distance the blue waters of the bay and the fretted line of coast; and nearer was the garden, a wide expanse of grass, that had once been lawn, in the midst of which was a patriarchal mulberry-tree.

The bedroom was quaint enough, and would not have been easy to match, telling eloquently, as it did, how the old house had fallen from its high estate. It was a very large room, leading by a door at the further end to another of equal size; but it was chiefly remarkable from the upper end of

the room being raised two steps above the other, so as to form a dais or stage.

'I suppose this was built for masques,' said the stranger musingly.

'That's just what people say, sir,' said Mrs. Watkins. 'Something like acting, masks are, aren't they? I often tell Watkins we might let this room for a theatre; but he don't like the idea, 'sir, being a Wesleyan.'

'I will take the rooms,' said the visitor, who did not seem to have heard much of this speech. 'I'm staying at the King's Hotel. Major Norman, that's my name; but as it means nothing to you, I suppose you would like a week's rent in advance.'

Mrs. Watkins smiled blandly and deprecatingly, and murmured something about 'gentlemen being so much pleasanter to deal with than ladies; not but what the lady down-stairs—'

All preliminaries were satisfactorily arranged, and the next evening found Major Norman comfortably settled in his new quarters. Mrs. Watkins proved herself by no means a bad cook, and served her lodger for dinner with a spring chicken delicately roasted, fresh-cut asparagus, and a gooseberry-tart with clotted cream. A hamper of wine had arrived from London, Vincent Norman not being a man to trust himself in the matter of drinks to the tender mercies of the Penmouth wine merchant.

'Fate cannot harm me, I have dined to-day,' he murmured, as a neat-handed and bright-faced Phyllis retired after clearing away the dinner things, and left him alone in his glory. 'This is better than that confounded hotel; I believe I shall be able to work here. Shall I begin to-night? No; I'll have a smoke, and think over it—plan it out.'

He filled his pipe slowly, drew up an armchair to the window, and leant back in the seat, enjoying the freshness of the air blown across the western sea.

Vincent Norman was a man of about thirty-five, tall, broad-shouldered, well knit, the ideal soldier in form, but with a face which, though not unsoldierlike, looked rather to belong to the man of thought than of action. He had a broad forehead, but with soft dark hair, musing gray eyes, lips that could be either sweet or stern, but which of late years had grown a little bitter in their smile, a little hard in their repose under the well-trimmed moustache; a straight nose, not too thin; a strong but not heavy jaw. He was good-looking, certainly—not quite handsome in the usual sense of the term, but it was not a face that one soon tired of.

It was a fair night; the May moon rose softly over the distant sea, and touched the jutting-out edges of the coast with her clear light. In the cold brightness the blossom-laden hawthorns and pear-trees in the garden below Major Norman's sitting-room gleamed like snow, and the wide lawn was chequered by the dark shadows of the trees on the paler turf. There was evidently a stream somewhere beyond the dark belt of sleeping trees that shut in the end of the garden, for Vincent Norman could hear the low plash and ripple of running water.

A nightingale was singing among the branches with that passionate liquid tremble which stirs so strange a delight in us, and Vincent wondered vaguely how long it was since he had heard that bird's song amid the blossoming sweetness of an English May.

How long? So long ago, that

the memory awakened by those throbbing notes seemed to be part of another life. The song took him back out of his present self to an ardent dreaming boyhood when all had seemed possible. He did not know when the bird ceased to sing; but when he shook himself free from the thought of the dead years, all was silent, except the far-off ripple of the brook, and the low rustling of the breeze through the boughs. He rose, with something between a sigh and a yawn, and was looking for the day's paper, when he heard from below the tender quiver of a violin.

Was it fancy? Vincent leant out of his window and looked down, but he could see nothing; the window of the lower room was at right angles with his. He leant back again in his chair and listened to Schubert's serenade, released from silence by the touch of some one to whom music was life. The sound of the violin, unalloyed by any grosser music, rose through the night air with an infinite sadness and sweetness, telling, in that yearning cry of love, of the fulness of human melancholy, of joy too near akin to sorrow.

As the serenade died away in the stillness, Major Norman held his breath. Who was the musician? 'The lady down-stairs?' Presently the violin sang again; this time a cavatina of Raff's, tender and passionate; then, after a pause, there came one of the wildest, gayest, and most mournful of Chopin's waltzes. That was the end; the silence was not again broken by the sound of the violin.

'Is it "the lady down-stairs"?' thought Major Norman. 'I wonder what she is like? Forty-eight and frightful, I suppose; or, more likely, it isn't she at all, but some

visitor or relative of the music-master genus. Whoever it is, knows how to play. She can't be young and unmarried, or she wouldn't be here alone. How the deuce do I know she is alone? and what the devil does it matter to me? If she were the very spirit of romance,

"Be she fairer than the day,
Or the flowery fields in May,"

I didn't come here to make a fool of myself, but to set to work in earnest.'

He got up late the next morning, and it was about one o'clock when he sauntered out of doors, and took the road down to the shore. The beach was deserted; the children and nursemaids who had populated it during the forenoon had departed to their mid-day dinners. One old gentleman in a bath-chair was being dragged slowly along the esplanade; three small boys were doing their best to commit suicide by hurling themselves violently down from the esplanade on to the sands below; and two coastguardsmen were sitting, half in and half outside the lifeboat-house, ready for a chat with, or a tip from, any stranger. Major Norman was well acquainted with their habits, and, not feeling a desire for conversation, briefly replied to their original remark of 'Fine morning, sir,' by 'Very,' and, turning away from the esplanade, took the road that followed the line of the bay, past Penmouth and the little fishing-village which nearly joins it. He walked along under hanging boughs, by apple orchards in which the trees were just past the full flush of their rosy bloom, and under gray stone walls over which the ivy clambered, and which a month before had been gilded by the primroses and purpled by the dog-violets, which grew in every

mossy crevice and chink between the stones.

As he reached a place where the road branched off into two, he hesitated for a moment which way he should choose. One, as he knew, still followed the line of the bay; the other was a narrow woody lane, with steep banks and overarched by trees. He turned down the latter path, and had gone a little way when he saw some one in front of him—a lady, standing high on the steep bank, which she had climbed to gather some late-blooming primroses. Her face was turned from Major Norman, and she did not perceive his approach till he was quite close, and she caught sight of him as she sprang down from the bank. Her look was one of half recognition, half doubt; then a smile flashed over her face as she exclaimed,

'Major Norman!'

'Miss Duncombe!'

She was a woman of twenty-eight or thirty, very graceful, with gold-brown hair which caught the light, a beautiful forehead, and more beautiful eyes. She wore a dress of dull olive-green, and her hands were full of flowers she had gathered—dark wild hyacinths, golden cowslips, a cluster of the apple-bloom's mingled rose and snow, and the pale primroses. A vision of spring? Hardly: rather a very gracious perfectly-dressed woman. In spite of her woodland surroundings, she involuntarily reminded one of Piccadilly. Her dress was very quiet, but spoke eloquently of the mistress-hand that had made it; her gloves, boots, hat, were all too perfect to be picturesque. Nevertheless, she was a fair picture, and her face was charming enough to make one forget her attire.

'Are you very much astonished to see me here?' she said.

'Wall, yes, though it is always foolish to be surprised.'

'You thought I was bound to be in London, and at my toil of amusing the British public. No; I am on sick-leave, and came down here to recruit. The doctors won't let me sing for another month yet: I have been ill. But you can't be more surprised to see me than I am to see you. I did not know there was another London exile besides myself at Penmouth.'

'Did you fancy you had the monopoly of the place?' he said dryly.

She laughed; her laugh was wonderfully sweet.

'I feel my sovereignty to be disturbed,' she said; 'and I dare say you do the same.'

'What is to be done?' said Major Norman. 'Shall I abdicate, pack up, and return to-night to Paddington? or shall we agree to reign together?'

Miss Duncombe shook her head.

'I can't determine at once,' she said. 'I don't know whether your claim is better or worse than mine.'

'How is that to be decided? By priority of arrival?'

'I think, rather, by the strength of one's reason for being here.'

'In that case,' he said, 'I yield. I have no reason for coming here. Any place that is quiet and pretty will do as well for me. Shall I leave?'

'You know I can't say yes without being rude,' she replied. 'I think you will find the place very dull.'

'There is no fear of that now, unless you tell me that I bore you.'

It was the conventional compliment conventionally spoken, but for once it expressed truth. After a week spent in his own companionship, Vincent Norman felt quite a sudden pleasure at

meeting a graceful and sympathetic woman, with whom he had sufficient acquaintance to entitle him to try and better it. He had met Miss Duncombe once or twice at crowded London receptions, had taken her down to supper, had talked to her in the Park. Of course he knew her well, as did the rest of the world, as Miss Clement, a famous singer and actress, as Marguerite and Ophelia and Elsa; but his knowledge of her as Miss Duncombe was confined to what has been already stated.

Down here at Penmouth, however, where they both had felt themselves as social Alexander Selkirks, they had met almost as old friends. Vincent, as he strolled along the lane by Nora Duncombe's side, thought he had never known in London how beautiful a woman she really was, how sweet her voice was in speaking, how soft the curves and how rich the tints of her hair. Or, rather, he did not think this so much as feel it, as he felt the sunlight shining through the leaves above, flecking with light and shade the turf of the banks, the greenery of the hedges, and the tall masses of the feathery leaves and delicate white blossoms of the hemlock.

They walked along together, talking 'Shakespeare, taste, and the musical glasses,' the last new play, the Academy exhibition, which as yet neither had seen, the last artistic fads in room decoration. At length they reached the end of the lane, which had so turned and twisted that when they emerged they found themselves looking down from the brow of a hill on the sea, glorious in the sunlight.

'O!' said Miss Duncombe, drawing a breath of pleasure; then she burst out laughing. 'What creatures of habit we are!'

she said. 'Here you and I have been talking, just as we might in a London drawing-room, of things we have no present interest in, and have never spoken one word of the beauty round us.'

'Probably in London we should have discoursed eloquently on the beauties of Nature—or you would; I am never eloquent.'

She looked up at him.

'Don't you think,' she said, 'that the good of such a place as this is that one's thoughts and feelings grow simpler and purer, and one forgets the Babel our lives are now?'

'If I must confess,' he answered, 'I love the sweet shady side of Pall Mall; and so would you, Miss Duncombe, if you had been grilling eight years in India, and were due on the gridiron again in five months.'

'Are you going back to India?'

'Yes; I may be there as well as here. India is a better place than England for a person who has no particular aim in life. There's less fuss made about living there than there is here.'

'I think you are rather inconsistent.'

She gave a little laugh.

'I am quite of your opinion. Are you consistent, Miss Duncombe?'

Her large soft eyes met his.

'I want to be,' she said.

'Don't,' he said, 'don't wish to unhumanise yourself; you could not be a woman if you were—or a man.'

'I don't want to be the last,' she answered a little sharply.

'Are you in jest or in earnest?'

'I can't tell you myself.'

'Major Norman,' she said suddenly, 'I believe you have a very bad opinion of people. There is something cynical in your way of speaking.'

'I am very sorry to hear it;

there is nothing I hate as much as cheap cynicism, and mine would be very cheap indeed.'

'But you think men and women are—'

'Men and women,' he put in. 'Ah!' with a sudden change of voice, 'there is my favourite wild flower.'

He sprang up the bank, and in a moment returned to her with a few of the frail and small white bells and tender green trefoil leaves of the wood-sorrel in his hand.

'I don't know it,' Miss Duncombe said, as he gave them her. 'Pretty thing; how lovely it is! It is like Shelley's harebell,

"At whose birth
The sod scarce heaved."

It is too delicate and small to put with the other flowers.'

'Yes; and it will fade almost immediately.'

Miss Duncombe produced a dainty note-book from her pocket, and placed the little flowers among its leaves.

'I can't bear,' she said, 'to throw a flower away till it is quite dead, or to watch it dying.'

'So you embalm it, where it may die out of sight without paining any one. It is the way of the world.'

'Did I not say you were cynical?'

'If you choose to take every word I utter as spoken from the depths of an embittered heart, I may figure as a very Timon.'

'Or Alceste?'

'You do me too much honour. Alceste are not as common as—' he suddenly remembered she might apply his words personally, and stopped.

'As Célimènes,' she finished his sentence for him quite calmly. 'No, she is natural enough; poor Alceste!'

'He would have been much

more to be pitied if C  lim  ne had taken him.'

'But if she had been different; there are other kinds of women.'

She was speaking simply and earnestly; simply and earnestly he answered her,

'I believe it.'

But something in his look made her, actress and woman of the world as she was, flush rosy red, and a silence fell between them for a few moments; at last Miss Duncombe felt the need of making some casual remark to break it, and said,

'Are you staying at an hotel, or in lodgings?'

'I was at the King's till yesterday; now I am in lodgings.'

'Are you well off now?' asked Miss Duncombe.

'Yes, I have found rooms in a charming old place; do you know it? Horneck House.'

'Horneck House! why, we are fellow-lodgers! So you are "the new gentleman" Mrs. Watkins told me of this morning!'

'And you are "the lady downstairs"! I understand now, Miss Duncombe; it was you whom I heard playing the violin' last night.'

She blushed slightly.

'I should not have played if I had known any one could hear; but they won't let me sing, and music I must have, so turned to my Guaneri for comfort. I hope it did not annoy you.'

'Do you think me "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils"? But I never knew you played the violin.'

'How should you?' she said; 'I only play to myself. My father was an amateur, music was his great passion, and so he had me taught the violin when I was almost a baby, and made me keep on the study even after my other capabilities were discovered. I

hated it then, but I am so glad of it now. I might lose my voice any day, but unless I were deaf or paralysed I should still have my music.'

'It is a great blessing,' said Major Norman, 'to reflect, as a listener, that one enjoys the sweets without the bitters of music.'

'But you don't know all the sweets,' she answered quickly, 'any more than one who looks at a picture knows the joy of an artist.'

'No,' he answered, 'you are right; and yet, Miss Duncombe, you can never hear your own voice as we hear it.'

'I wish I could,' she said; 'then I should learn my faults. But neither can you know what it is not only to sing, but to sing in a great theatre, with the dramatic excitement to aid one.'

'I suppose, to you, it is the only real life.'

'Yes,' she answered—'that is, at times; but then at other times one feels such a poor thing: one's art is only for a day, only a rendering of other people's higher art. It passes away and is forgotten.'

'But without it we could not appreciate the higher art in the same measure.'

'I know; the singer and the player are simply the instruments through which the composer and the dramatist speak to men. It is not always a pleasant thought, if one loves art.'

'I think what you say is only a half-truth; but it is no mean lot to be the priestess of Mozart. Is it not,' he said, with real interest in his eyes, 'that you are over-tired by the strain of work? You will get rested here, and will see things more healthily.'

'Yes,' she said, 'I am resting between the acts. I feel rather as if you and I had first met on the

stage, and now were resting and talking behind the scenes.'

'It is a pleasant rest,' he said; 'but are you not longing to be back in the midst of your triumphs and your labours?'

'No; I am glad to breathe quietly, to have time to think and remember myself.'

All this while they had been walking along the road that led to Horneck House, and now they were opposite the tree-embowered gate. Major Norman held it open for his companion to pass through, and then followed himself.

'Good-morning,' Nora Duncombe said as they reached the front door. 'I don't go in this way; I have my own door into the sitting-room round on the other side.'

She held out her hand, then turned round by the side of the house, and Major Norman went up-stairs to his own rooms.

The days went by like a quiet pleasant dream to the two people who had established themselves for a little while at Horneck House. Major Norman simply had come to Penmouth because he wanted some quiet place where he could meditate on a book he had wanted to write for the last ten years on our Indian frontier. Nora Duncombe's reasons for visiting the pretty out-of-the-world seaside town have been already given.

Neither he nor she often spoke of returning to London; but if Miss Duncombe alluded to it, it was always with a certain regret that this lotus-eating calm must come to an end, and the curtain of her life-stage ring up again shortly.

Vincent and Miss Duncombe had seen a great deal of each other during this time, while the apple-

bloom faded to brown and the syringa burst open its creamy waxy blossoms, thickly sweet. They had met in the garden, had walked together along the 'umbered beach' and green lanes, and through the pleasant fields now golden with the buttercups.

This could not last long: it was but an *entr'acte*, as Nora had said, a dreamy melody, peaceful and tender, between the acts; but perhaps one of the two half unconsciously wished it could be the overture to a fuller and fairer life.

It was the first evening of June; the day had burnt itself away in the west, but the sky was still blue, deepening to the darkest hue of the sapphire tint. Major Norman had had letters to write for the Indian mail, and they had kept him in his rooms the whole day; but now, looking down to the garden, he saw there a tall and graceful figure in a dress of dim gray.

A quick thrill shot through him, such as of late had stirred his pulses whenever he had touched 'the white wonder' of Nora Duncombe's hand. He mentally anathematised himself for a fool, sat down, and took up a French novel.

He read three-quarters of a page, then threw the book down and left the room for the garden, where Nora Duncombe was walking in the twilight.

She looked up as he came towards her. It was not so dark but that he could catch the smile on her lips and the welcome of her eyes.

'I have not seen you before to-day,' she said. 'It was a pity if you stayed indoors, for it has been such a perfect day.'

'And will be a perfect night,' he said.

'The day grown pale. O, if June would but last!'

'How tired one would be of it!' Major Norman lazily observed.

'I don't think I should,' said Nora. 'This is the first June I have spent in the country since I have been a woman. June to me always means the season and the stage.'

'And June roses, Covent Garden bouquets. This is a different side of the month.'

'Yes,' she said softly.

For a moment he seemed about to say something; but her face was turned away, and his words, whatever they were, remained unspoken.

They had wandered down to where the garden was bounded by a stream, flowing between banks of rushes and forget-me-nots, overshadowed by trees and shrubs.

They stood by the side of the stream at a little open space; the lingering light fell on Miss Duncombe's fair face, making it look pale, but showing the long sweep of her white throat, the full curve of the heavy eyelids, the beautiful mouth. It was one of those times when she was lovely, and contented the eye absolutely.

She was leaning by a syringa, plucking its white blossoms one by one, and casting them into the water as she spoke.

'Shall you remain at Penmouth much longer?' she asked.

'No,' Vincent answered. 'I am due at my brother's on the 14th; and you, I suppose, will soon be in the midst of that other June you know so well.'

'Yes, my voice is quite strong again.'

She spoke musingly. Major Norman could almost have fancied he heard a ring of regret in her voice.

'Would it be asking too much, I wonder,' he said half jestingly,

'if I asked you to let me judge of your recovery?'

She laughed.

'There is no accompaniment, except the brook.'

'What does that matter? Your voice needs no support.'

'Thank you,' she answered; then she half turned away as though to pluck another syringa flower, and the low notes of her voice fell on Vincent Norman's ear, perfect in their tenderness and sweetness.

He had heard her sing in a great theatre, her voice put forth in all its strength; but her singing had never touched him as it did now. How could it? Then she was only an actress and singer to him, he but a unit of her audience; but now they were man and woman together under the silent stars, and each one of her notes vibrated in his heart and stirred to new life—what?

It was a strange song she sang, with a passion and sadness in the music that gave life to the words;

'Was it for this I loved thee? Only this?
O, bow thy head down once before we part;

So seal mine agony with one sad kiss;

Fear not, thou shalt not feel my salt tears smart.

No word of hope or comfort ere I go?

'Tis better so.

Turn thou away; be mine the grief alone!

Thine eye shall keep its light, thy lip its red;

Earth has enough of woe without thy moan;

Retain thy beauty, though its soul be dead.

'Twas not in thee Love's perfectness to know;

'Tis better so.'

What strange contradiction in her nature was it that moved her to choose that song? A song written by a man out of his heart's bitterness, and the words and music of which held a reproach for her, and for her alone.

Years ago she had been engaged



to marry Cyril Elmore, a young man just rising into fame as a musician. She broke off the engagement in a moment's revulsion at the idea of losing her freedom, Cyril having wished her not to sign a contract for America for the winter after their proposed marriage. He left her without a word of reproach or reply; and, in spite of her relief at once more being her own mistress, she was sorry for the loss of her boy-lover with the dark-gray eyes and beautiful sensitive face.

Shortly afterwards she heard that he was about to leave England for a long while, and then wrote to him asking one kind word of farewell and forgiveness. In reply she received no letter, only the ms. of the song of which the words are written above. A week later she learned that the ship in which Cyril Elmore had sailed had gone down with every soul on board.

Nora was sorry then; perhaps her self-reproach never quite died away when she thought of the poor boy who had loved her so well, whom she had fancied she was fond of. She kept to herself his legacy of this his last song; and no one but herself had ever heard it till this night, when she sang it to Vincent Norman.

She could not understand now what impulse had made her choose this song of all others, and was vexed with herself the next moment that she had done so.

She had the dramatic sympathy with the musician, which goes so far towards the making of a great singer; and she had sung this song, which told of the love she had never understood or prized, as though she herself felt the pain from which the music had its birth.

And so Major Norman, looking at her, thought that here was a

woman in whom a man might safely trust.

'Do you remember,' she said, turning to him, 'our talk that first day of Alceste and Célimène? My song agrees with your view of the matter.'

'Yes; yet Alceste needed pity as it was.'

'I thought you held that Célimène was not worth the winning.'

'Better care for some object unworthy love than not care for any one.'

Nora shrugged her shoulders.

'Very well,' she said; 'and in real life Alceste would have carried it out by marrying the first girl he met, and consoled himself for Célimène's weakness by being weaker himself.'

Vincent turned quickly on her.

'You don't believe that!' he said. 'Why should you say it?'

She laughed.

'I have only caught your own tone of talk. You should be glad to have so apt a pupil.'

'My pupil! Heaven save you from such a master!' he answered bitterly; then in a gentler, though not less earnest, voice, he said, 'That first day we met you reproved me for cheap cynicism, and you were right; though perhaps if you knew my life you would say I had some cause for despising myself, and so a poor cause—a very poor one, I own—for railing at the world.'

Her eyes sought his pityingly and tenderly.

'There is no reason I should tell you this,' he said. 'Except that, since I have known you, your freshness of heart and your faith in the world have been a constant lovely rebuke to me, making me feel my bitternesses *fades* and slight. I don't like to hear the echo of my own empty words from your lips. Don't speak so again.'

'I never will,' she said.

The low tremble of her voice made his pulses beat faster; but he constrained himself by an effort, and said,

'Thank you. You know in *Faust* it is the woman saves the man from the mocking devil of disbelief; the woman who draws him by her influence to the heaven of her own faith, to whom the charge of his soul is given; not the man who drags her down to be degraded with him by the sneering spirit who believes in nothing.'

'That time is dead,' she answered, in a sudden fierce impulse of honesty, alien to her usual mood. 'Now we women are like you men! We, too, have lost all you sought when you came to us; so how can we tell you where to find them—those lost treasures of faith and hope?'

'By a greater than these. By Charity, by Love; and through that, both will find what are lost. But you are speaking of other women, not of yourself. Do not be so bitter. You do not know how much you have taught me, or how different the world looks to me now. I believe in the ideal of womanhood I have learnt through you, even against yourself.'

Her head drooped, her voice was sad and true, as she answered,

'I can do nothing. A worldly woman, leading a worldly life.'

Against her own will, something moved her to speak the truth to this man; but it was hardly a truth he was likely to accept as such.

'Why will you slander yourself to-night?' he said. "'A worldly woman"! Well, if all worldly women were like you, the world would be very fair. Good-night.'

He left her, afraid lest he had said too much; she stood motion-

less, with a look on her face of mingled joy and sadness, touched with self-reproach.

'If all men were like you,' she thought, 'there would be no worldly women. If I—'

A quick delicious shame, a sudden and intense ecstasy, made her cover her face with her hands, as though to hide it even from the night.

'He does love me, I am sure of it,' she thought, when again she looked up at the brightening moon. 'And I—yes, I do love him. I never knew before what it meant, but now— O, if he wished it, why did he not speak now? I should have yielded and been happy; and yet— Could I really? I might regret. I should if I had to give up my artist life; and I have fancied poor Cyril was right in his song. No, I am not afraid; just now I feel I would give up everything for love, the love I have wanted all my life. I know I should be happy.'

She stood with her face raised to the stars, and full of a rapt sweetness it had never worn before. Now, in the very fulness of her womanhood, Love's mystic chrism was laid on her brow.

Was she worthy to receive this baptism into the world of self-sacrifice and holiest duty, without which love is naught? to take up the burden which should be borne proudly as a crown for Love's dear sake, or never lifted at all?

Meanwhile Vincent Norman was passing across the fresh grass, hoary with dew, towards the house, with his whole heart passionate with a great love, an intense tenderness and longing to perfect the life of the woman he loved. He thought sometimes that a shadow of weariness and discontent troubled the fairness of her face, that she needed something. Was it love? and could

he give her what she wanted? Would his love suffice? It was strong enough, if that were all.

Yet he feared himself—feared lest he should only be asking her to enter into a harder life in being his wife. Knowing how much she would be to him, he dreaded lest he should be but selfish in asking her. Marriage for a woman must always be renunciation of much of the ease and pleasantness of her life; he knew this, and wondered if he were sure love would make amends to her; sure that if Nora Duncombe trusted herself to him she would never repent it, or he have to feel he had dealt unjustly by her whom he loved so much.

He must put his fate to the touch, whether he won or lost it all. His heart pulsed still quicker as he thought of her loveliness and sweetness, of her soft eyes, so melancholy in their beauty. 'A worldly woman'! He laughed to himself at the words. Even when he had met her in a London drawing-room he had fancied there was a deep tender nature under the careless charm of her outward seeming, and now he knew it. Whether she loved him or not, she would still be to him the one woman in the world.

Strangely, or rather naturally enough, Miss Duncombe avoided meeting Major Norman for one or two days after that evening.

'Climb high, feel high, no matter; still
Feet, feelings must descend the hill
An hour's perfection can't recur.'

And Nora felt very differently the morning that followed the night when she had stood by Vincent's side under the trees by the stream. She had been moved out of herself by mingled influences, and had taken the reflection of Vincent Norman's strong passion for the same feeling in her own

heart; but the next day she had returned to herself, and half-wondered if she were the same woman who had lifted up her face to the sky in a rapture and thankfulness for the great gift of love.

A strange shyness at the idea of meeting Major Norman overpowered her; the truth was, she dreaded lest he should ask her the question to which she was not prepared to give an answer.

For she did love him. If she gave herself up to her thought, she experienced a luxury of rest in the idea of his love and care, as in the dream of the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; he suited her, too, better than any man she had ever met; she knew she would not tire of him, but—There were so many 'buts.'

She could not bear to give up her freedom, she said to herself, thus glibly sliding over the tangible and intangible objections, which, if fairly stated to herself, would have had a somewhat small and selfish aspect. And if she gave up her freedom, she had always determined in her own mind, ever since poor Cyril Elmore's death, that it should be for something worth the exchange, a social position that should fitly crown her triumphs. She knew that such a position was ready to her hand if she chose to take with it a baronet of old name, large fortune, and musical and æsthetic tastes, with lank hair and a retreating chin; but she would forfeit all chance of it if she married Major Norman.

Nevertheless this morning, the third since she had seen him, she was conscious of a longing for his presence, for the restrained warmth of his greeting, the sudden light in his brave eyes. She rose from the breakfast-table, pushed away from her some music she had been studying, and, going to the tar-

nished glass let into the panelling of the room above the mantel-piece, she inspected the reflection of herself therein with a questioning gaze, as though seeking help.

'I am looking better,' she thought, 'than when I came down here.'

The conclusion was right; her face was fresher than it had been a month ago; it seemed as though she might have been bathing it in the May dew which had lain thick of mornings on the grass. Her eyes just now were restless, but they shone darkly soft under the white line of her even brows, which had lost the weariness they had worn when she had first come to Penmouth. Her dress was dark chocolate cashmere, made very plainly, its only ornament a gold brooch, 'Rome work,' made 'by Castellani's imitative craft,' fastening the dress just below the narrow line of white collar. The bright waves of her hair were smooth and shining, closely coiled at the back of her head. She looked exquisitely fresh, that most potent charm in a woman to a man's eyes. She put on a round hat the same colour as her dress, with a jay's wing in front, then stood irresolutely by the window, as doubtful what to do.

'I think I'll go down to the shore,' was her final determination.

Now it was just half-past ten, and Miss Duncombe might have remembered that Major Norman always returned after his morning swim and walk about this time, so that she was nearly certain to fall in with him on her way towards the sea. But as she would have indignantly scouted the idea that she had any thought of meeting him, it is but fair to suppose that this had escaped her memory.

She did meet him, after all. His face was graver than usual,

and after they had said good-morning he added abruptly,

'I see you are going away.'

'You saw yesterday's paper?'

'Yes, the advertisement of Miss Clement's appearance—'

'And consequent disappearance from Penmouth of Nora Duncombe.'

'Our holiday is at an end.'

She felt as though the 'our' in his sentence had touched some responsive nerve in her, but only answered lightly,

'We shall meet in London, though?'

'Yes.' He spoke hesitatingly, then looked at her, as though he would fain read her thoughts; but she had been an actress too long not to be able to conceal them when it pleased her, and it pleased her now. 'When do you leave?' he asked at last.

He had turned back, and was walking with her towards the sea. She had the feeling of having been through all this before, of knowing the end.

'On Tuesday,' she said.

Then they walked on in silence till they reached the esplanade. They leant over the railing and watched the tossing play of the waves, each touched with white, and laughing in the sunlight. The sea was shot with green and dark purple; but though the breeze was fresh, the sun shone royally, throwing the line of the coast out vividly, and showing each gray rock and patch of dry turf of a little island about a mile out in front of where Major Norman and Miss Duncombe were leaning over the rail.

'Do you know,' Nora said at last, for the sake of saying something, 'I have never yet been to that island.'

'Neither have I,' Vincent Norman answered; 'I never thought about it. Is it a *sine quâ non* we should go out there and pay our

respects to the gulls? If so, let's make the call in company.'

'It wouldn't be etiquette, and I have no cards with me; still—'

'Would you like the row?' he asked. 'If so, let's go now. I can get a boat in a minute.'

'You really don't mind? If it wouldn't bore and tire you too much.'

'And if you can dispense with cushions, shawls, &c. Well, then, it is settled. Have you sufficient confidence in my rowing powers to trust to them, or would you rather we took a boatman?'

She made a pretty gesture of dissent.

'Please not,' she said; 'they are so worrying and wearisome. But won't it be too much for you? I wish I knew how to row, and could help you.'

Major Norman did not join in Nora's wish. When they were in the boat, and she was leaning back in the stern, with her own peculiar grace of attitude, a bright smile of enjoyment on her face, and her eyes meeting his, he realised how much he preferred seeing her thus, to watching her struggling with an oar, and growing heated by the work and the sun.

They soon reached the little island. Vincent made the boat secure, and then helped his companion out of it across the slippery seaweed-covered rocks, to a smooth little stretch of turf, which was the highest point of the small cluster of rocks. They explored everything there was to explore with a minuteness worthy of the Swiss Family Robinson; but as one rock pool is very like another rock pool, and one small patch of turf much resembles another small patch, their journey of discovery did not take them long, and they returned to the stretch of turf they had first come upon, with no greater result than

the moulted feather of a gull, which Nora had found on a rock and fastened in her hat.

'There is not much to see here,' Vincent said, as they sat down under the shade of a sloping rock.

'No; but I have enjoyed the tow; I wish it were not the last.'

She had meant to be on her guard, but, alone here with him and the sky and sea, she could not help being softer, gentler, and less cautious than she had intended.

'Who knows but the world may end to-night?'

'I hope not. What is that for, though? I know it.'

'The Last Ride Together.'

For a moment she made no reply; she plucked the pale blossom of a sea-pink, and held it up against the deep blue of the sky, seemingly engrossed by looking at it, as she said at last,

'If his wish had been fulfilled, they would both have grown very tired of that eternal ride.'

She spoke quietly, trying to cheat herself into thinking she was doing best for him as for herself.

'Do you mean that?' he said.

Her eyes dropped before his steady gaze, and her voice faltered as she stammered,

'I don't know.'

She saw from his face that the moment she had steeled herself against had come, and she nerved herself to meet it, as his voice asked,

'Are you afraid to make the trial? could you trust me enough to let our lives meet?'

He leant forward, waiting her answer, all the might of a man's love in his earnest face, his expectant eyes.

Nora Duncombe felt as though her brain were burning, her senses and will failing her in her longing to yield, to turn and give herself

up to him, and so take the happiness she yearned for and yet feared. She clenched her hands tensely in this brief fierce struggle against her tenderer self, and forced herself to reply,

'I could not.'

He could not guess all that was passing within her mind; he only heard the short cold answer, that sounded as though there were no hope that appeal or prayer would soften her. A low but very bitter sigh escaped him.

'I have been a fool,' he said after a pause.

She felt a foolish sick pain in her heart at his sigh, and all the anguish it told; she could not bear his words, and it was more to comfort herself than him she said hurriedly,

'No, not that. Have I hurt you? You do not know how I hate to give you pain, how I hate myself for—O, why did you care for me?'

'Why?'

The question was sad, rather scornful. He did not echo her word as a reproach, but it fell as such on her ear.

She knew too well how she had caused him to yield to his love for her, how she had drawn him on, but why? Not even to herself could Nora answer the question.

She had called him cynical, but she knew all along that he was not; that he was simple, true, brave, holding faith in any man or woman unless he or she gave him proof of being unworthy belief. A thousand times simpler, truer, sweeter in his nature than she, who had rebuked him for bitterness, who had charmed him with her pretty enthusiasms, her seeming faith that the whole world and those who dwelt on it were very good.

For one moment she saw this clearly as in a lightning flash; it

was not a pleasant self-revealing.

'I should never suit you,' she said to him; and her voice was pleading, her eyes were imploring, in spite of herself. 'We should not be happy.'

'Say you would not,' he answered, 'and that is enough. To me the mere winning you would overbalance all the worth of life.'

'You say so now, but in two years' time—'

'You hardly know me; I am not very changeable.'

'And then you would want me to give up my art.'

'I should want you to do nothing except your own will. You cannot think I should wish to tie your freedom.'

'But you would like me to leave the stage,' she said, with a perverse pleasure in trying to discover his nature.

'What does it matter,' he asked, 'since you have refused me? But you would have been free. I might have been glad if this had not been your life; but I cannot say even that, for I love you as you are, complete. I would never have cramped you, as it would cramp you, to sever you from your art.'

'But how about your profession? It is as much to you as my work is to me. I could not have borne to think I had spoilt your life. Can you not see it would never do, even if—'

'That "if" would have smoothed all; if you had loved me, the crooked would have been made straight and the rough places plain; as it is—O my dearest, I could have loved you so well!'

His words shook her resolve, but still she did not surrender. She knew there was a traitor, or one whom she deemed as such, within her gates—Love—who whispered to her that this man

against whom she held her heart's citadel was her rightful king, at whose approach the gates should have been thrown open wide, not barred as against a foe; that, if she denied him entrance, she did so at her own peril, the peril of his scorn and of a desolate life.

Something of this may have shown itself in her face, for he bent forward and spoke eagerly:

'Nora, do you love me? Is it anything else that separates us? Tell me plainly once if you can care for me or not; do not say yes if you cannot from your heart, but remember a lie either way will be a sin against your own soul. Do you love me?'

Her head swam; she felt as though all the world, the bright sky, the flashing green and purple sea were a dream, as if nothing were real but Vincent's voice; but she gathered up her whole strength, and looked at him unflinchingly as she said,

'No.'

And all the while his words rang in her ears, as though they were a judgment: 'A sin against her own soul,' she knew it only too well.

Silently, as with one accord, they rose and went down to the boat; silently Vincent handed Nora in and took his own place; but now he never looked at her as she sat with bowed head and heavy eyelids, as though fearing again to meet his gaze.

They reached land at last, and walked along the beach till they came to a road which led up to Horneck House; then, as by a common impulse, they turned to say good-bye. A strange stricken look was on his face; but there was a wilder sadness in Nora's eyes as, holding out her hand, she whispered rather than said, 'Forgive me.'

Vincent felt a quick pity, he knew not why, in the midst of his own pain, for this woman through whom he suffered. Did a suspicion of the truth cross his mind? If so, he made no attempt to alter her mind; he knew it would be of no avail.

'Have I anything to forgive?' he said gravely and gently. 'If I have, Nora, forgive yourself; I only love you, dear.'

It was a quiet spot, and there was no one near; she raised his hand to her lips, and kissed it twice; then turned swiftly away from him down the road that led to the house.

Miss Duncombe was sitting writing that evening in her own sitting-room at Horneck House. She had delighted her maid by telling her that they should return to town on the morrow instead of waiting till Tuesday, and ordering her to set about packing up forthwith. Then she wrote to the landlady at her London lodgings to tell her to get things ready, and to her dressmaker about a costume for a new part.

She finished her letters and gave them to her maid to post. The girl went out in the glimmering twilight, and Miss Duncombe leant back in her chair, wondering what Vincent Norman was doing in the room above. Was he sitting there, lonely and sad, thinking of her?

A dim idea came to her of stealing up to his room, bending over him as he sat there in the dusk, and saying, 'It was only a madness, darling; I love you, and love is best of all.' How would he receive her if she did? She could fancy the gladness dawning on his face, the feeling of his arms round her, an utter rest and happiness such as she had never known.

She shook herself free at last from the dream, with an impatient anger at her own folly. She rose and looked about for the matches with which to light the candles, and so shut out the sad twilight of this long bitter day. In her search she came across something which struck her eye—her note-book.

She took it up listlessly, and opened it without any reason that she knew of. In it, between a letter from the *dilettante* baronet mentioned some way back, and a

calculation of what her receipts would be from a foreign engagement, there lay the wood-sorrel blossoms Vincent had given her, faded and crushed to death between compliments and money calculations—poor little flowers that had been as the first tender breath of love's summer, the summer whose beauty Nora would never know.

With a quiver as of pain and a sharp sob, she shut the little book again and turned to light the candles.

The *entr'acte* was over.

HORNSWOGGLED.

A Western Plant.

THERE were four of us in the party—a bank-manager from St. Paul, two Englishmen going out on the plains to hunt, and myself—and we occupied a section in a car on the train bound for Glyndon, in the Red River Valley. That was as far as the train went in those days. We had been discussing the strange things that happened occasionally out in this western world, and our conversation received the silent attention of two other people besides ourselves. One listener was a tall man, in ordinary dress, with a clean-shaved face, excepting in so far as that he wore what the Americans sometimes call ‘a chin whisker,’ and over one eye he had a green shade. The other was a small elderly man, whose dress and general appearance stamped him as being a frontiersman. The tall man sat in the section ahead of us, on the seat next to us, as if for the purpose of better hearing our conversation. Not in an offensive way, but as men listen to a general conversation in a public place. The little man sat on the opposite side of the car, leaning out of his seat across the passage in our direction.

‘Well, yes,’ said the bank-manager, in answer to a question put by one of the hunters, ‘once I was. It was during the week of the State fair at St. Paul. At that time, all the farmers, or grangers, as we call them sometimes, are in the city. The State fair is a good deal like your agri-

cultural shows; I guess it’s the same thing under another name; anyhow, it fills the city with agriculturists of every kind, and every kind of business-man that has to do with them. On the Thursday afternoon, just before the bank was going to close, I was standing inside the counter, near the teller’s drawer, when I walked a regular old prairie hay-seed. The town was half-full of them, and this fellow was a type of a certain class of them. He had on an old pair of trousers tucked into a pair of boots that probably had never seen blacking since they were bought, and a buffalo coat thrown back, exposing a flannel shirt without any collar, but set off with a brand-new green-satin tie. He had, I supposed, bought this, and the new hat he wore, to fix himself up a little for the fair. He wanted polishing up badly enough. He wore also a pair of large spectacles with broad horn rims. To look at him, you could see at once that he was one of those everlasting bores, that talk you to death about crops, and argue all night about the merits of rival mowers. He lounged up to the teller, and said, in a voice that sounded like a clap of thunder in a vinegar-jar, “Say, mister! are you running this yere bank?”

“What is’t you want?” asked the teller curtly, who was about to check his cash and get away.

“Waal, I’ll tell you how it is,” and then he turned and addressed

his conversation to me. "You see, squire, I've got some animals down to the fair here. There's two on 'em is the finest steers out of the hull crowd, and they han't given me no prize for 'em neither; but I'll be goldoned if you or any square man won't say as my two steers—mind you, I'm speaking of the two red steers—ain't the best in the hull lot. They are, squire, and you'd better believe it."

"Well, I haven't got anything to do with awarding the prizes," I said impatiently; "and we're going to close the bank now, office hours are about up."

"You ain't got nothing to do with them, I know, squire, I know that well enough; but don't crowd a man. Look here, I've sold them steers, and six more, to a Chicago buyer, for a matter of five hundred and fifty dollars. It's dirt cheap, squire, and you'd say it if you saw them steers of mine. Mebbe you've been down to the fair?"

"Yes, yes," I said, anxious to get rid of him, "I saw the steers, and the cows too."

"Why, them ain't cows; them's Durham calves," he began, when I struck in, and said,

"Look here, I don't know anything about your steers or your animals anyhow: what's your business with me?"

"Waal, squire, I hearn you was the handiest chap at your business on the hull street, and I want you to go slow a bit, for I ain't much up to your business-folks' ways, and I'll tell you what I'm a-runnin' for." He pulled a long greasy-looking pocket-book from the depths of an inside pocket, and began to untie the twine that fastened it up. "This yere Chicago man has given me this yere cheque. Now I ain't much on the count myself, and I want

to know if this is a square deal. He says that's the same thing as five hundred and fifty dollars in greenbacks. Now I want to know if that's so, for no man ain't going to take away them steers if there's any shenanaghin about this yere cheque; you can bet your sweet life on that, squire."

"I examined the cheque, which was drawn on the first National Bank, Chicago, and signed W. R. Chitty. It appeared to be in due form; but though I had heard the drawer's name I did not know him, and so I told my granger friend.

"Waal, I don't know a heap about him, myself," he said. "I sold him some cattle last fair-time, and he paid me part in cash and part in one of them cheques, and I got the money all right; but the cheque worn't the same colour as this yere one, and didn't say nothing about no National Bank on to it. It had two men's names on it, and one of their pictures in the corner, so as folks could know him, I guess, if he didn't act square up to the handle with them."

"A different bank, that's all. You say the cheque he gave you was paid?"

"Yes; yes, it were paid O K; and if you say this yere's all right, why, I guess I'll let him take them steers away on Monday."

"I don't know that it is all right; I only suppose so. I can't cash it for you, if that's what you're after."

"No, no; go slow, squire. I ain't asking you to do nothing that ain't reg'lar; but mebbe you could do something with this yere thing, in a day or so, if I leave it with you, as would fetch the dollars and cents out of it, eh, squire? How's that?"

"I'll send it to Chicago for collection, if you like," and I couldn't help laughing at the

scared look he put on at the proposition.

"Send it to Chicago! Hold up there, squire. I don't suppose but you know your business; but I have heard they're a mighty slick lot down to Chicago."

"O, that will be all right, you needn't be afraid," I said; for he evidently thought the people of Chicago were on the look-out for greenhorns.

"Waal, squire, if you're satisfied, I am; but be mighty keerful them Beats down to Chicago don't hornswoggle us both out of them five hundred and fifty dollars. It would come mighty hard on me just now, for I'm going to put up a new house on my place down to Kandiyohi County, and the old woman's on the build too for her cheese fixings."

'Then he invited me to come down to the fair next day, to look at his two red steers, and offered to stand the drinks there and then if I would come out; and then he went off. I may tell you that, when I told him to indorse his cheque, he first wanted me to do it because it wasn't much in his way, and he'd had to get a neighbour to do it last year; but finally he wrote "Sed Bird, Kandiyohi County, Minnesota," across the back of the cheque, making one line of each small word, and two of Kandiyohi and Minnesota, in letters of about a quarter of an inch long.

'Next day he was in again to ask how that affair was getting along, and to show me a shawl he'd bought for his old woman. "Married her twenty-three year ago down to Wisconsin, squire," he said; "and she can hitch up a span of horses quick'r'n than any woman, and most men, round the place." He had to tell me too that a neighbour of his had also sold a steer to this same buyer,

and had been paid in cash, and he wanted to know whether I didn't think this suspicious. I told him it was not, but rather the contrary, as I supposed the amount being small, the Chicago buyer preferred settling in cash. No doubt, I said, his own cheque would be paid in a few days, by return of mail. He said that was all right, he worn't in no hurry. Then he offered to introduce me to his friend who had sold the steer, but I promptly declined. One of that crowd was enough for me.

'Soon after the bank opened on Saturday, he was in again, to tell me that he had met another neighbour from Kandiyohi at the hotel, who had sold to another Chicago man, for a cheque; and that he had advised its being brought to me to be fixed. I thanked him, and again declined an invitation to come right along and see them steers. He left, saying he had to get a few fixings for the old woman right away, as he calculated upon getting up the line home that evening. Just before the bank was going to close, however, he was back again.

'He had bought a span of horses from a man who was exhibiting in the fair, and had agreed to give two hundred and fifty dollars for them. The man wanted his money down, because he had to take his animals out of the fair-ground; and my granger also wished to get home for Sunday, the fair being over. Had I got the money from Chicago yet? No, there wasn't time. I couldn't receive it till Monday morning.

'Well, he'd heard at the hotel, he said, that the Chicago buyer was a square man and did regular business round the State; but his fear was, that the Chicago bank might hornswoggle me about the money. I told him there was no

danger of that; and he then asked whether I couldn't pay the man for the horses, and deduct it out of the amount of his cheque. This was not usual, of course, and there was no time to make inquiries about him, as the bank was just going to close for the day, it being Saturday; but there seemed to be no danger about doing so. He was evidently one of the granger crowd that filled the town; he had pressed me on several occasions to accompany him down to his stalls at the fair; and his story generally hung so well together that, after a little hesitation, I said I would do so.

'I knew the Chicago men were in town buying, and I had old hay-seed's indorsement; so I handed him a cheque, and told him to make it out for two hundred and fifty dollars. It ended in my having to fill up the body of the cheque, and he signed it. He counted his money, held out his hand to shake hands, and, inviting me to call in whenever I came down to Kandiyohi, departed. I never saw him again. The cheque was returned from Chicago marked, "Not W. R. Chitty's usual signature;" and as I read it I knew that a confidence-man had gone through me for two hundred and fifty dollars.'

'One of that crowd was enough for you, then, evidently,' said one of the Englishmen.

'Good enough!' said the manager, smiling; 'the worst of it was that, thinking over the matter that evening, it all of a sudden flashed across me that the hand I had shaken was not that of a regular granger. It wasn't rough enough. That shaking hands was the only weak part of the cuss's whole game. It was too late, however, then, to do anything, even if I had been sure.'

'Pretty rough on you, sir,' said the car-conductor, who had stood by to hear the end of the story.

'Yes,' said the manager, 'I used to get mad about it for a long time; but I've got over that now.'

'Couldn't play it on you again, sir?'

'No, not worth a cent.'

'There's some fellow playing the confidence-game along the line now,' the conductor said; 'scooped a granger out of a hundred dollars yesterday, and went through a Canadian emigrant, on his way to Garry, for all he was worth. I guess he'll get away, though, before we strike him. He'll have a rough time of it if any of the boys about Glyndon lay hands on him. I'm told there's an old prairie-crusher along here somewhere, that he went through last fall, that swears he'll raise his hair if he catches him.'

I had noticed that both the fellow-travellers near us had listened attentively to the story, the long man smiling as the manager related the way he had been taken in, and the old frontiersman leaning further and further over the arm of his seat, till his head almost reached across the passage of the car. When the conductor had ceased speaking, the old man broke into the conversation with a burst that was almost a yell, 'And by the Eternal, I'll do it!' We all turned to look at the old fellow, who had worked himself into a great state of excitement, though we had not paid much attention to him. 'Jumping Judas!' he continued, 'if ever I sot eyes on that all-fired skunk agin: see here, mister,' he said, pointing at the bank-manager, and getting off his seat the better to ask his question, 'did you

take note of that white-livered hound's eyes?

'Not particularly,' said the manager. 'He wore spectacles, but I noticed a scar running back from one eye almost to his ear.'

'It's him!' said the old man, and forthwith he delivered himself of a string of ingeniously blasphemous invectives. Indeed, it struck me at the time that in this particular he was quite equal to any Western stage-driver I had ever met.

'Went through you too, did he?'

'Did he! see here, I'll tell you.'

'Wire in, old man,' said the manager; 'but look here, there's a parson and a lady at the other end of the car, so let up a little on those ornaments of speech of yours.'

'I ain't going to say nothing to hurt the minister, nor yet the lady, but I'll raise that slab-faced galoot's hair, sure as you're born, if ever I strikes his trail agin. You can bet your bottom dollar on that, colonel. I'd been out for a couple of year on the Yellow Stone, tradin' along with a half-breed from Pembina, and I'd made a matter of six hundred dollar or thereabouts. I come in last fall making for Chicago. I'd put a one side a few dollars for a bit of a bend at St. Paul, me and that half-breed Joe Bourinet, and the rest was a-going to my gal at Chicago: she was to school there along of a convent, and a-going to be married to a young chap. They was a-going to move West a piece, and set up store, and the old man was a-going to do it for them. I hankered after this all the time I was out tradin' with them Sioux, for I han't seen her better'n an six year; and I was almighty fixed on this here idee of mine. I was a-going to whoop

it up lively for them, you'd better bet, and the old man was to be the big toad in the puddle too. Well, I come along up the river with Joe, and crossed at the Forks up here, and come on down till I struck this here railroad. Joe, he got into a muss with a fellow at the Forks, and got hurt; so I had to leave him to be looked after by the man as runs the shanty at the crossing; but I come across a chap who made himself sweet as syrup. He was up the valley buying wheat to ship east to Chicago, he was, and he'd been out a little way on the plains, he had, to see something of the Indians on their native plains, and it give him great satisfaction to meet a man as had lived years with them. There worn't nothing pleased him so much as meeting me, the measly-faced son of Judas Iscariot; and he fooled this here blamed old idiot as is telling you till he couldn't keep his blamed old tongue still, but got talking about his trading and what he'd realised. When I thinks of it I gets madder'n a hunted buffalo. Well, colonel, we travelled along together, settin' side by side in one of these here car-seats; and he brings out a small bottle of brandy—what you got at the hotels wasn't good enough for him—and nothin' wouldn't do him but I must tell him all about my life among the Tetons, for he was a-going to make a book, he was, to show up the rascality of them Indian agents. We sot down to dinner together at one of the stations along here, and got to be as friendly as a couple of prairie dogs; and when we got to St. Paul, nothing would do but I must stop along of him at his hotel. He had a small oak box bound with iron with him, and he kep this between his feet all the time, and took it in to dinner with him,

and wouldn't let the conductor nor no one handle it. One time he went into the baggage-car to find the boy with the cigars he left the box with me, and told me to be all-fired partic'lar that no one else didn't touch it, for it was filled with money as he was using, buying up wheat for shipment to Chicago. No woman with her fust baby worn't so partic'lar as he were about that box. When we gets to the hotel and slicked ourselves down some, he says, "My friend, I want you to come along with me to the bank, while I take this box and deposit of it there. I don't know but what, out West here, some evil-disposed person might not attack me in the street, if they saw me carrying it. If you are with me it will be safe." I waited outside while he took the box in; and after a while he come out and said that was all right, and his mind was easy. Then we went back to the hotel to eat, and he said he was a-going out. "I've got to see the freight-agent of the railroad," he says, the lying scalawag; he didn't want no freight-agent. "I'm a-going to see him to make arrangements for the shipment of some car-loads of wheat I have down here to the dépot, to go through by the freight-train to-night. When I've fixed that I'll come back, and we'll go together to the show up here, to the theatre." "Bully for you," says I, for I thought he was a little on the minister side of the trail, and didn't go to no shows, leastways not to that kind, as the pictures was about all over the walls: gals whooping it up, you know, colonel—reg'lar out-and-out show. Waal, I waited about an hour, having a drink or two with the boys round, for they had a fust-rate elegant bar down to that hotel, when back come

my friend all of a lather, as if he'd been running afore a war party. "What's the matter?" says I.

"It's real bad," he says. "I must find that bank cashier somehow; the freight-agent won't let the wheat go on to-night to be paid on delivery. He wants the freight-charges paid in advance or else the wheat can't go; and it's got to go, for it's sold for delivery."

'And then he stood thinking, agathering his brows, and then figuring on a slip of paper, and muttering about dollars and cents and car-loads, and every once in a while saying as it was too provoking he hadn't left his money with the hotel clerk instead of taking it to the bank.

"Why, in thunder, don't you take it out of the bank again?" I asked him.

"I can't," he says; "the bank's closed, and I can't get it till the morning." And then he began walking up and down the room again, and muttering all about figures and bushels and suchlike, and once and again looking over at me. At last he says, "If you'll wait here for me, I'll go up to that bank cashier's private residence and explain the case. Mebbe he'll come down to the office and let me have that box out again this evening; for get it I must, or I'm clean busted on that wheat."

"That's all right, pard," I says; "step right up to the cuss's shanty and bring him right along. I'll come with you; and if he won't come, by thunder, it wouldn't be much of a job for you and I to handle him ourselves."

"No, no, no; that won't do," he says. "If he saw another person he might think we meant no good, and might refuse to open the bank till the clerks did it in the morning. I'll go alone, if you'll wait for me here."

'Waal, I was agreeable, and so I stepped down and set 'em up again with the boys at the bar; and then it come over me, why, in thunder, I didn't lend him the money till the morning instead of fooling away the time arter that cashier, when we might have been having a high old time at the show. So when he come back in half an hour, looking as if he'd seen all his relations clean scalped before his eyes, and said that the bank cashier had gone into the country for the night, and that if he couldn't get that wheat on he was a ruined man, cos wheat had risen ten cents a bushel owing to some scalawags cornering it, I says right off,

"How much does that freight-man want?"

"Let me see," says he, looking as bright as a new dollar; "six car-loads, sack-freight, to Chicago." And then he got to figuring again, and says at last, "With what I have in my pocket-book I guess I can fix it with four hundred and eighty dollars. It's a new proprietor to this hotel, or I guess I could have borrowed it at the office till the morning. I've best part of a thousand dollars left in that box up at the bank."

"Four hundred and eighty," says I; "well, I'll let you have it till the morning;" for I know'd he'd got the money, for I'd handled that iron-bound box myself; "and then we'll git right away and see that show."

'I took out a bearskin pouch I had, and counted out what money I had left. There was five hundred and sixty dollars rolled up there, and I asked him if four hundred and eighty would fix it up.

"Let me see," he says, "four hundred and eighty;" and then he began to figure again. "Yes, that is more than enough with

what I have. Four hundred and seventy-five will do. I need only keep enough to pay the theatre, because in the morning I shall go to the bank to once."

'Waal, gentlemen,' he continued, addressing us all collectively, including the conductor and the boy that sold the cigars, apples, books, &c., on the train, 'I counted out four hundred and seventy-five to that everlasting thief; and when he had jaw'd his thanks for my timely aid, and told me to wait a quarter of an hour while he paid the freight-bill at the dépôt, he went off. Wait! I waited, I guess I did. I waited, until I felt a kind of cold sweat over me when he didn't come back; and I went down, pale and trembling as weak as a calf just born, to the office, for I thought, "If anything goes wrong with this here business, my gal's chance is busted." I kinder staggered up to the office, and told the clerk I was afeared something had happened to my friend. Then he asked me the particulars, and got to looking mighty cross as I told him.'

"I guess you'll not see him again," said the clerk. "There's always some galoot going through the greenhorns in this hotel. Why, in thunder, they don't try the other house, I don't know. Here, put on your hat," said he, madder'n a Texan cow, "and come along with me."

"There was a bit of a crowd had gathered round the counter, and one of the boys wanted me to have a drink to set me up a bit, for I felt pretty bad, but I hadn't no heart to drink.

"He ain't got no time to drink now," said the clerk, as he came out of the side door. "Here, hurry up, and we'll go to the dépôt first."

'Waal, gentlemen, we tried the dépôt, and found there warn't no

such wheat going through; we found the chief of police and told him, and he said he'd set his crowd on the tracks, but it was a pretty slim chance; and I went back to the hotel, and hauled myself up them stairs step by step, as if I'd lost the use of my limbs, and laid down on the bed and cried like a gal whose lover's gone back on her.

'In the morning I got that clerk to send the balance of the cash, after paying the bill, to my gal; for I hadn't the heart to see her and tell her, and all the while she thinking I was coming with my pocket full of dollars. When she got the news she told her man, and he behaved like a yaller dog, he did, the blamed cur. He made excuses: said he couldn't leave his situation just then, and that his mother was ill East and he had to go to see her; and finally he backed out of marrying her; and she, poor crittur, took to crying and sorrowing about it and got herself ill; and then she wrote to him to come and see her, and he writ back to say as he couldn't; and then she started out to find me, and got ill on the road and got worse; and finally the poor little thing passed 'em in, and they planted her way down here on the line.'

The old man's voice got a little gruff when he told us so far, and he ceased speaking for a while, during which time the train began to slow up for the station, and several of the passengers, including the long man that had sat in the next section to us, rose, and prepared to leave the car. Then the old man suddenly broke out, in a harsh but somewhat suppressed voice,

'I've never met that man since, but when I do, by the powers—see here!' he added, suddenly breaking off in his speech,

and showing the handle of a navy Colt revolver underneath his deer-skin shirt. 'I've carried this here loaded for him ever since; and when we cross trails again, I'll end that sneaking, prowling, white-livered wolf on the spot where I meet him!'

The passengers were getting out to dine at this station, and some of those from our car were already on the platform. The long man was stepping off the car, when the train-boy, who had heard all the old man's story, pulled him by the sleeve, and said something to him.

'What's that you say, sonny? Him as was setting right there?'

'Yes,' said the boy. 'I noticed under his eye-shade a scar reaching right back from his left eye.'

The old man said no more, nor waited to hear any more, but made straight for the door of the car. The same impulse that moved one moved all four of our party; for, seizing our hand-satchels, we all sprang from our seats and followed the old frontiersman, or rather three of them did; for, seeing a quicker way, I turned and got out of the door at the other end of the car, outside of which the car platform was quite clear. By this means I reached the station platform as the old man stepped upon it. I saw him look hurriedly round, as I did myself, in search of the long passenger with the green shade over his eye; but he did not at first see him. He had left the car hardly a minute before us, but he was not in the small crowd of passengers on the platform. Perhaps he had gone into the dining-room, before the door of which the waiter was striking a gong, while the proprietor was yelling, 'This way for dinner! twenty minutes for dinner!' The old man was moving excitedly about, look-

ing first at one passenger and then at another, when the idea evidently struck him that the man he was seeking had gone to dinner. He had turned to go there, and was nearing the door where the waiter was still hammering the gong, when he saw, as I too saw, for I was following closely, the other passenger moving quickly across an open space at the back of the station, in the direction of a small board house that stood away out by itself. He looked over his shoulder just as the old Indian trader had leapt from the platform in pursuit, and on the impulse quickened his pace to a kind of run. But the old man was running hard; and the other, seeing apparently that he could not gain the shanty before being overtaken, resumed his former step, and quickly moderated that to a leisurely walk. As his pursuer neared him he stopped, and then turned round, at the same time, as I noticed, quietly slipping his right hand behind him.

'Stop!' shouted the old man.

'Lift that roof off of your eye.'

'My shade!' said the other.

'Excuse me, I have a sore eye.'

'It's his voice,' said the old man to himself; then aloud: 'Sore eye or not, lift!'

'What do you want with me?' asked the other man.

'Want! you wolf-souled thief. I'll show you what I want! I want my daughter's life, I want what you can't give. I want your black heart out of you! I'll show you what I want;' and as he spoke he pulled the heavy revolver from beneath his leather dress.

But the other was too quick to be thus dealt with, and his hand now grasping a revolver was round in a second, and as the intention of his enemy was beyond doubt, he levelled his pistol and fired. The bullet hit the old man, but was not fatal, for he raised his pistol and fired, and then rushed on the other, who had been brought by the shot upon his knees. Two more shots rang out almost simultaneously, and the old man staggered forward and fell dead upon the corpse of the swindler.

A number of people, attracted by the pistol-shots, were hurrying to the spot, and among them were the two Englishmen and the bank-manager. The latter, as he reached the bodies, stooped and lifted the shade from the eye of the dead man, and after a moment's examination replaced it, and remarked,

'That's my granger, sure enough. Well, he'll do no more hornswoggling now. I'm stopping over here till to-morrow, and I'll see them decently buried.'

HEARTHUG FARCES:

MRS. TRUMPET'S TELESCOPE.

MRS. MAINWARING TRUMPET was a widow—fat, fair, and *fifty*. Had you ransacked the English language for a word to describe her, you could have found one only that would do her justice. Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet was prodigious. She was prodigiously rich, prodigiously stout, prodigiously active, prodigiously versatile, prodigiously talkative, and most prodigiously self-important. She was good-humoured too: stout people always are; the adipose substance produces that quality of itself. We may be sure there is more good-nature lying potentially in a tub of Dorset butter than the most vigorous disciple of philosophy could evolve by the efforts of his righteous will in a twelvemonth. Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet was therefore good-humoured of necessity: she was far too fat to be anything else. And this noisy buttery good-humour of hers so lubricated her failings that she was tolerable and even agreeable in society. It is true she did bustle about, and put you down or thrust you out of sight; but her voice was so rich and her smile so sunny, and she was on such unmistakably good terms with herself, that you forgave her. That is, if you were not of her particular sex, you forgave her. But if you were or are of her particular sex, you never did and never do forgive a drawing-room snub. Is it not so, gentle reader?

Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet went in for 'the world.' She loved

aces, and would bet gloves, and eat lobster-salads, and drink champagne. She was crazy about balls, and would dance until, for her size and weight, she was as great a wonder as the sun on Easter-day. She frequented the Opera, and could hum you all the new tunes the next day, getting a little out now and then, but still you knew what she meant. If any questionable play was on the stage, Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet would be in a side box, giggling and blushing and exploding behind her fan in such a very honest and absurd way, that she half ruined the piece for the people who wish to enjoy their vice seriously like rational creatures. 'Have you read it?' she would ask, when any fashionable lady novelist came out with something more shocking than usual. 'Have you read it? *Because I have!*' in one of her stage whispers that you could hear across a hayfield. And she would drop behind her fan, allowing her great rolling eyes to appear, that she might telegraph at you, and hiding the rest of her face, while her big jolly laughter sounded like a river underground. She was the best hand at croquet in three counties. She took up lawn-tennis and played so splendidly, that one day in the bishop's gardens she sent her winning stroke right into the study-window, covering the prelate with fragments like a working glazier, and so confounding him that for a few seconds he really thought the end of the world had come.

She applied herself to rinking with equal enthusiasm, and got the thing up in two hours, after which she went round and round at an awful pace, like a seventy-four-gun ship in a high wind, until she came into collision with tall Mr. Index, who had just come out as senior wrangler, and was trying if a little exercise with his legs would not be nice for a change and useful for purposes of health. Him she drove to earth with a velocity which by itself was the hint of a problem; and upon his prostrate frame her own descended with a crash so terrific, that amidst the ruin of his faculties Index could scarcely collect reason to register a solemn vow that if his life were only spared he would renounce all athletic sports for evermore.

Thus did Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet move through life's various scenes like a catapult, a battering-ram, an eighty-one-ton gun, a thunderbolt, or anything that is the embodiment of all-conquering force.

She was, we said, a widow. Fifteen years ago she had been Miss Mainwaring, with plenty of good blood in her veins, but no money in her purse. Benjamin Thursby Trumpet, Esquire, a Bristol merchant sprung from the gutter, and worth a heap of money, 'came' and 'saw' Miss Mainwaring, and was 'conquered.' He proposed for her; she accepted his money. In three weeks' time she was Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. She became rich, and rare were the gems she wore; but O, that vulgar husband! With all her eccentricities she was a lady; and O, that husband! Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet learned the lesson that others have learnt before her—that you cannot sell yourself and have yourself at the same time. Well, she fetched a

handsome price, and, to do her justice, she did not grumble much.

Benjamin Thursby Trumpet—like Mr. Bounderby in *Hard Times*—loved to talk of his origin, and how he rose from nothing, leaving the audience to infer what a clever hard-headed fellow he must be. But he grew too fond of this practice, and one day, when he had been riding his hobby rather hard, a wag, upon his leaving the room, caught up his visiting-card, and reading his initials aloud—'B. T. Trumpet'—called him on the spot Mr. Blow the Trumpet. The name stuck. Two months after she was married, a loving friend said to the bride,

'Do you know they nickname your husband Mr. Blow the Trumpet?'

The bride broke into a laugh; the shaft of such a malice could not harm her. She rather enjoyed it; and the friend had to search her quiver for another arrow.

'And they do say—you don't mind, of course, dear—that he has met his match, and that you are Mrs. Blow the Trumpet. Horridly low, I call it, dear. Don't you?'

The bride nearly fainted with indignation, and for the first and only time in her life needed smelling-salts. She was not half so excited on the memorable night when her husband was found sitting in his dining-room over his port, quite dead. She pronounced it apoplexy at a glance, sent for the doctor, and flew about the house with brandy and basins and mustard-poultices and hot flannels, reminding all who saw her in some inexplicable way of a fire-engine making its way to an exciting conflagration. But she did not faint, and never asked for so much as a whiff out of a smelling-bottle.

Thus did Miss Mainwaring be-

come Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, widow, with a large fortune all her own. The vulgar husband was gone—'mercifully released, my dear,' the widow would say; though what it was from (except herself), no one could have told. And yet Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet was not happy. Who is? She wanted to get rid of this dreadful name Mrs. Blow the Trumpet. How should she manage it? Apply to the Queen for a patent? Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet bethought her of an easier, a more agreeable, and a more economical way.

The rector of her parish was a widower, tall, lank, gloomy, and always wearing a comforter. An ordinary hedgestake, neatly dressed in clerical attire, with a white-woollen wrapping at the upper end, surmounted by a black hat, might have passed for the Rev. Arthur Arrowsmith at a very short distance. Mr. Arrowsmith was a powerful preacher, and in common life grave, yet apt at times to be seized with a kind of grim humour, of which the sign would be a series of violent inhalations. These, in an ordinary being, would have denoted the onset of a fit, but with Mr. Arrowsmith only meant that his fancy was tickled. He had been twice married. His first wife had ten thousand pounds, and she lived ten years. He became trebly gloomy for the space of eighteen months, and always had an allusion in his sermons to the grave where one's heart was lying. Suddenly he cheered up, and married another lady, this time with twenty thousand pounds, and his sermons began to allude to the possibilities of comfort which are provided for even the greatest sorrows. The second Mrs. Arrowsmith, however, held out better than her predecessor, and

it was twenty years before her relict found himself raking up his old allusions to the quiet grave, and the people who are there. And now Mrs. Arrowsmith the second had been dead for eighteen months clear, and Mr. Arrowsmith, thinking once more of consolation, fixed his eyes on Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. His eyes were not much to look at, being deep set and no-coloured; but they told their tale to Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet as clearly as if they had been azure or jetty orbs, signalling from the most delicate environment of hair and cheek. Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet saw that the Rev. Arthur Arrowsmith had fallen in love with her. To show her appreciation of his taste and her reciprocity, she bounded into love with him—took a kind of header into the sentiment, and immersed herself with an amazing splash. They were engaged two days after. Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet talked about the affair everywhere. She laughed over it, cried over it, grew crimson about it, published it on the house-top, swore her friends to secrecy about it, and generally behaved like Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet gone mad outright, which may be taken to denote mania of seven-fold power.

She courted Mr. Arrowsmith at the Sunday-school, and stood so close to him when he came to visit her class, that one morning she trod on his corn and made him jump three paces clean, with a squeak that frightened the whole room. She ogled him from her front seat in the gallery with such directness and power, that several times he lost his place and spoiled his best sentences. She ran after him in the street, coming up to him—sly, solemn, and cadaverous as he was—all breathlessness and heat, which, at her time of life, did

very well for blushes. She sent him presents of slippers that he could not wear because they were too small, and worsted jackets for the cold weather which hung about him in vast loose folds, because, in her headlong way, she had taken the measure of her own frame for the pattern. She never lost an opportunity of talking about him, praising him, dragging him forward, and linking him with herself. Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet vowed and declared that every night of her life she dreamed of Mr. Arrowsmith without ceasing, and awoke calling upon his beloved name. In fact, her love was a perfect cataract, always going on, and making a most tremendous noise in the mean time.

At last a grand idea struck her, in pursuit of which she started for London by the early express, getting to Paddington at ten o'clock. She gave a porter half-a-crown to catch her the very first cab. She told the cabman that she would give him half-a-sovereign if he drove her to Dollond's in twenty-five minutes. She sprang from her cab and rushed into the shop panting, and demanded to see the very best telescope manufactured for field use. She saw one with stand complete for forty pounds, tried it in St. Paul's Churchyard, bought it, paid for it in five-pound notes, got her discount for cash, was in her cab and rattling back to Paddington again exactly in ten minutes and a half. She caught the return express and was home again before lunch, having travelled between two and three hundred miles, and transacted all her business. Her lunch was a pheasant, and she ate the bird to the bones, and then set about completing her design.

Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet's

boudoir-window looked straight across to the rectory, at a distance of about one mile. In her boudoir-window she erected her telescope, aimed full at the dining-room and study of the rectory. She adjusted the focus, and, scarcely breathing with excitement, applied her eye to the glass.

A long silence ensued. Adams, the maid, who stood by, with a serious expression carefully spread over a derisive grin, began to think that the experiment had failed, when, after a long interval, Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet sprang to her feet with a violence which upset the telescope, stand and all.

'I saw him,' she cried triumphantly, 'as plainly as if he were in this room!'

With trembling fingers she set up the glass again, and now, in a more composed frame of mind, began to explore anew. Another long silence followed; and then Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, never taking her eye from the glass, called out in a grave voice, like an astronomer who discovers a comet, but who, having expected it, is not amazed, only gravely elated,

'Adams, he is at his dinner.'

'Lawk, ma'am!' Adams said, because that committed her to nothing.

'At his soup, Adams,' she continued, fixed in her posture. 'I see the ladle quite plainly.'

'Lawk, ma'am, how clever!' Adams said, feeling the ground better under her feet. Hereupon, for many minutes, nothing was said.

'Adams,' Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet said at last, 'he has had three helps of soup.'

Adams scarcely knew how she was to take this.

'You see, ma'am,' she said

diffidently, 'he is a very thin gentleman.'

'I don't see what that has got to do with it, Adams,' the mistress said, returning to her telescope; 'here comes the fish.'

Another long pause ensued, at the end of which Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet turned round upon her maid.

'Twice, Adams. I could not be sure, but I think it must be cod. Well, three and two make five.'

'So they do, ma'am,' Adams said, wisely giving a free assent where the fact was indubitable and the safety of a coincidence of opinion tolerably certain.

'Shoulder of mutton' called out Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet in due course; 'and I suppose that's onion sauce. What a pity one can't smell with a telescope, and one would be sure!'

'You can't smell with it, I suppose, ma'am?' Adams said humbly, like a true disciple of science.

'No, you can't smell with it, Adams,' the mistress answered. 'Bless me,' she added, before this piece of information was well off her lips, 'two glasses of sherry, one after another, without taking breath between. I don't quite like the look of that, Adams.'

'He is such a very thin gentleman,' pleaded Adams, who knew well that she might take up the defence without vexing her mistress.

'I suppose they do take more building up, Adams,' the mistress remarked, still gazing.

'I'm sure they do, ma'am,' Adams replied fervently. 'There's my father, ma'am, thin as that paper-knife, ma'am, and the quantity of beer he takes to keep himself up you wouldn't believe. It's quite ruin, ma'am, that it is. I'm sure, ma'am, nothing Mr. Arrow-

smith does can be wrong, ma'am, after them sermons.'

'Quite right, Adams,' replied the mistress. 'Order the brewer to leave a nine-gallon cask at your father's house to-morrow.'

'Thank you, ma'am,' Adams answered. 'But as I was a-sayin', what a dear good man that Mr. Arrowsmith is—'

'He is just cutting into his cheese!' called out Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. 'The very cheese I sent him on Tuesday!'

Thus things went on until the rector's dinner was over, when Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet rose to her feet, and said,

'I know everything. Soup three times, and fish twice; shoulder of mutton three times at least, and I am not sure about a fourth, for I breathed on the glass and had to clean it. Sweets twice, for certain; cheese, dessert, and six glasses of wine in all. I think, Adams, I do think—'

'They requires it, ma'am,' Adams said firmly; 'it's the call of Nature, that's what it is.'

'Well, I suppose so,' the mistress said, reasoning with herself as her maid prepared to go downstairs. 'You see my size, and how little I eat.'

'Just so, ma'am,' Adams said.

'The doctor says,' continued Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, laughing, 'that I live on my fat.'

'That's just it, ma'am,' Adams said, leaving the room; only when the door was closed behind her, she added,

'Three eggs and bacon to breakfast this morning, and a cold trout, with marmalade to follow. That's living on your fat, I suppose. Well, it's easy knowing what your fat lives on.'

Under the most favourable circumstances Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet never could keep a secret long, and now, in her elation at

her own brilliancy, she told several friends of the contrivance by which she was enabled to watch her beloved one at all hours. Of course people laughed, and thought the whole thing a capital joke ; that she did not mind the least. But matters grew serious when the rector heard that his whole parish was laughing at him on account of Mrs. Trumpet's telescope. He had never heard of the telescope before.

The observing reader will have remarked in his passage through human life, that just in proportion as men are ludicrous, in that degree do they hate the idea of becoming so. To smile like Falstaff, because we are the cause of wit in others, is given only to the immortals of waggery ; your average man hates of all things to be laughed at. Now when Arrowsmith the grim, the solemn, the lank, discovered that he was the laughing-stock of his congregation, he came to a determination in the gloomy recesses of his mind that he would break off his engagement with Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. But how accomplish that ? He could not openly allege the telescope as a cause. Fancy an impassioned counsel haranguing a jury against a reverend defendant, who broke off his engagement because a woman who loved him better than life had looked at him through a telescope ! That would never do ; the matter must be accomplished by craft, and Mr. Arrowsmith set himself to think how it could be done.

At this time there came to settle in his parish a maiden lady of enormous wealth—that is, for every thousand pounds Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet possessed Miss Quick possessed three. Miss Quick was fifty-four ; possibly she had been pretty in a lackadaisical sort of way thirty years ago. But

since then Time and Miss Quick had had several interviews. She looked now rather like an old wax doll which had fallen on its cheek in the toy-shop window on a hot day, and put the feature out of shape. Traces of bloom were on her face still, but the two cheeks did not match in size, which was a little awkward. Ah, yes ; but while certain of Miss Quick's charms had faded, others had burst into bloom. Her papa, who was something in Bermondsey, and used always to have a leathery kind of smell, died, and left Miss Quick 150,000*l.* How many faded charms will that sum renew ! Bethink you, how many dimples, ringlets, pearly sets of teeth, carnation lips, fairy feet, peachskin cheeks, ivory fingers, and taper waists are equal for bewitchment to 150,000*l.* ? Ah, pretty dears, who boast yourselves in mere beauty of nature, remember to us males a day comes when we begin to see that we cannot dine off an eyebrow, however fine its arch, nor sip the sparkle of an eye, nor pay rent and taxes with a breath, perfumed though it be like gardens of Araby the blest. In a word, dears, we grow stout, practical ; we come, as that sad little song of Thackeray's says, 'to forty year.' And as for Mr. Arrowsmith, he had come to forty year, and to fifty year ; indeed, he had come to fifty-five year. Let an Iliad of love-making be written on a finger-nail of paper. Miss Quick made open love to Mr. Arrowsmith, though never a word she spoke ; Mr. Arrowsmith replied that if the thing could be arranged he was ready, though never a word *he* spoke. And now for Mrs. Trumpet and her telescope.

Six days later, Mr. Arrowsmith drove past Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, and in his carriage was seated a young and pretty girl.

No sooner did Mr. Arrowsmith see his engaged wife than he drew back in the carriage with all signs of confusion, and tried to hide himself. 'O-ho !' thought Mrs. Trumpet, colouring up till she was as red as a soldier's coat. That was Saturday. At Sunday-school next morning, Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, severely, suddenly, and with evident distrust in her voice, asked Mr. Arrowsmith who that young lady was with whom he drove out yesterday afternoon. The clergyman was so palpably confused, and made such fearful blunderings in his reply, and he so obstinately declined to tell who the girl was, that Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet closed the interview by glaring at him like a dragon. Indeed, had the dragon ever glared at St. George so, in all probability the champion would have tumbled off his horse before the fight began, and we should never have had any legend at all. Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet came home after church as sulky as a thunder-cloud.

'Adams,' she said, in an appalling voice, 'I have been deceived !'

'Lawk, ma'am !' Adams said.

'Yes, deceived, Adams,' the mistress went on. 'He has been flirting with a woman—a minx—a hussy not twenty !'

'Lawk, ma'am,' Adams said, 'to think of it ! And him such a thin gentleman !'

'I don't see what that has got to do with it, Adams !' remarked her mistress. 'But,' said Mrs. Trumpet, pacing her room like Lady Macbeth, 'I shall—I shall—I shall—'

'I would, ma'am,' Adams said, 'if I was you.'

'You don't know what I was going to say, Adams,' the mistress rejoined.

Next morning at twelve o'clock Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet sat down to her telescope as usual, only the eye that gazed through it burned so that it might have melted the glass. In a moment she sank back with a scream.

'Adams !' she cried, 'she's there !'

'Who, ma'am ?' asked Adams.

'The minx !' screamed Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet.

'Lawk, ma'am !' said Adams.

Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet applied herself to the telescope for a few minutes, and then burst into another scream.

'He's kneeling before her, Adams !'

'Well, I never !' Adams ejaculated ; but her excited mistress heard her not.

'Adams !' screamed Miss Mainwaring Trumpet, in agonised tones, 'he has got his arm round her neck ! O Adams, Adams,' cried she, drawing back from the instrument, 'I am going to faint ! Hold me up, Adams !'

'Couldn't you see it out first, ma'am,' suggested Adams, 'and faint then, ma'am, when all is over ?'

'I will, Adams,' the mistress cried resolutely ; and she began to gaze again. Alas, new disclosures awaited her.

'Adams, are you there—are you there ?' she screamed out. 'He is kissing her !'

'My gracious !' Adams exclaimed. 'Well, there's no being up to the men.'

'Once, Adams !' the infuriated lady continued ; 'twice, three times ! Again, again ! That's five, isn't it ? Another ! Six kisses, Adams ; and the last such a long one !'

'Long or short is much the same, ma'am,' Adams ventured to remark.

'It is not the same !' cried

Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. 'It makes a great deal of difference; but of course you know nothing about it.'

'No, ma'am,' Adams said; 'I have been mercifully preserved.'

Adams was thirty-five, brisk, and good-looking, and had just quarrelled with her eighth beau.

More like Lady Macbeth than ever, Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet stood up, and said, in tones that made even the favourite Adams shake in her shoes, 'The carriage!' 'The rectory!' she called out, in the same thrilling tone, to her coachman, as she stepped into the vehicle. 'I must see Mr. Arrowsmith,' she said to the servant at the rectory. She never asked was he out or in. 'I must see him;' and she strode with avenging steps across the hall and into a small morning-room. 'Say that Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet wishes to see him instantly. Instantly! do you hear?' she said to the servant.

'Yes, ma'am,' the man answered. 'In a taking she is!' he remarked, as he went to deliver the message.

The infuriated Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet might have heard two or three gasp-like inhalations before the door opened. She might have seen the faintest remnant of a grin on the rector's lean face as he entered the room. But she saw no smile, heard no sound of laughter; she was riding on the whirlwind of her rage, and alive to nothing but the chastisement she must inflict.

'Arthur Arrowsmith,' she began, 'you are found out. Walls have ears and windows have eyes. O you perjured man!'

'They may have,' retorted the rector, who seemed wonderfully well prepared for the attack; 'but even if that be so, however curious and interesting the fact may be

considered in the light of an unexpected and rather inexplicable phenomenon, still I don't see what it has to say to my being a perjured man.'

'You were seen in this room,' the lady went on, 'seen when that clock was pointing to twenty-eight minutes past eleven. What was going to happen just then, Arthur Arrowsmith?'

'I should say the clock was going to strike the half-hour,' the rector answered, with perfect composure.

'O you wicked and most shameless man!' cried Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. 'I could not have believed it, only I saw it with my own eyes.'

'Aided by Dollond's telescope,' remarked the rector.

'Yes, aided by Dollond's telescope!' his accuser answered. She did not care that the fact was discovered. 'And let us be thankful for any instrument that finds out the baseness of men. Carrying on with that chit of a girl! I declare I could not have believed it!'

'Why should I not carry on, as you call it, with that girl if I please?' demanded the clergyman, not the least moved by her vehemence.

'Hear him speak!' she screamed, invoking some invisible power. 'O Arthur Arrowsmith, to behave so with that white tie round your neck!'

'The only thing to be said about the tie round my neck is that there is not quite enough starch in it,' replied the rector. 'That, I take it, is the laundress's fault, not mine.'

'And your gray head!' continued Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, sweeping forward in her invective, regardless of this flippant interruption.

'Now as to my head,' the

clergyman said, for the first time with a little warmth, 'there is not a gray hair on it.'

'Well, with your bald head, then!' cried the frenzied Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet. 'With your bald head, to behave so, it's appalling!'

'If I were to behave so without my bald head, it certainly would be appalling,' retorted the rector. 'Surely, Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, you don't mean to say that if I were decapitated my conduct would have been more becoming?'

This sardonic mood he maintained through the interview; but no such toyish opposition could stem the rush of Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet's wrath.

'You knelt before her!'

'Yes; her shoe-string had come undone.'

'You put your arms about her neck!'

'She asked me to fasten her neck-ribbon. By the way,' the rector added, 'what do they call these ribbons that stream down their backs? A name in jest. Follow-me-lads! That's it. She asked me to fasten her follow-me-lads.'

'Her follow-me-lads!' repeated Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, in a voice that sank into the deepest bass with indignation. 'Well, if the earth were to open and swallow me up— But,' she cried, darting back to the main track of her impeachment, 'I saw more than that; you kissed her.'

'As to kissing,' the imperturbable rector replied, 'that might be the kiss of peace.'

'Kiss of peace, indeed!' echoed the scornful dame. 'A likely story! The kiss of peace was not given half a dozen at a time. And if the first was a kiss of peace, will you tell me what were the other five?'

'I shall answer no questions,'

replied the rector, seeming to become very grand and dignified all of a sudden.

'O, then you don't even repent!' Mrs. Trumpet went on. And now her last bit of patience vanished. 'You glory in it! Arthur Arrow-smith,' she cried, in a voice which rang through the room, 'I renounce you; I cast you off. I would rather marry your coachman than you. We are strangers from this moment and for ever, and I only wish that there were witnesses to hear me say the words!'

'Witnesses are here,' the rector said, breaking into a smile, and throwing open the folding-doors as he spoke. 'You were not likely to miss much of Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet's interesting conversation, were you?' he added, addressing himself to the adjoining room.

Here two ladies sat at luncheon. One was the pretty rival, the other Miss Quick. Both ladies seemed trying to suppress their laughter, only the younger one was a little rosy red amidst her amusement.

'Miss Quick you know,' said the rector, now quite calm. 'This is my dead brother's only child, my adopted daughter; a dear good girl;' and he stroked her cheek with a warmth that was pleasant to see, while she grew rosier red than before.

Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, for once in her life, lost her power of speech. She stood and gazed, but words would not come.

'Here,' said the rector, drawing his niece's neck-ribbon through his fingers, 'here is her follow-me-lads. I tied it smartly, did I not?'

'I have made a mistake,' gasped poor Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet at last. 'I have made a mistake; I apologise; I withdraw my words. We shall be as we have ever been. I mean,' she added, hanging her head a little, 'as we have been this past two months.'

'No, thank you,' the rector said; 'you have renounced me and cast me off. If you please, we shall be as we have been for the past two minutes.'

'What? Do you mean that—' Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet could not finish the sentence.

'I mean,' the rector said, drawing himself up and buttoning his coat tightly round his thin frame, 'that any lady who takes telescopic views of my private life shall for the remainder of her existence be kept at a telescopic distance from me. From henceforth, Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet, distance shall lend enchantment to any view of me and my concerns that you may take; and from what I have seen, I am inclined to think that any enchantment which I may derive from the inspection of yourself will be in a great measure owing to the interposition of the same agreeable medium.'

Light broke on Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet at last.

'I have been ensnared,' she cried more furiously than ever; 'I have been deceived!'

'You have, by your own telescope,' the clergyman answered. 'Take my advice, and keep that valuable instrument for the observation of the heavenly bodies, and let other bodies alone.'

'Well,' Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet retorted, with a creditable rally of her spirits, just as she marched

out, 'all I can say of my telescope is this, I have not tried it on any heavenly body yet. Good-morning to you!' and, with somewhat of a recovery of majesty, she swept from the room.

'Adams,' she said, when she reached her own chamber, 'it's all over. We are strangers now. Our lives are parted, Adams, and will run in separate channels to the great ocean.'

Adams was not quite equal to this high metaphorical flight.

'Broke off, is it, ma'am?' she asked.

'Broken off,' her mistress said; 'yes, broken, shattered.'

'Well, ma'am,' Adams said, 'there may be a blessin' in it. You see, ma'am, he was such a very thin gentleman.'

Miss Quick became Mrs. Arthur Arrowsmith, and the blooming niece lived on at the rectory. The story of the telescope got abroad, and of course everybody laughed, until at last Mrs. Mainwaring Trumpet very wisely resolved to laugh herself. And finally, to show that she feared the ridicule of no human tongue, the doughty dame lent the instrument to the local museum; and there it stands, with a great ivory plate underneath bearing this inscription in Roman capitals—*Mrs. TRUMPET'S TELESCOPE.*

CONCERNING THE UNEXPECTED.

IN one of his eloquent and nervous speeches—using the word ‘nervous’ in its old-fashioned appropriate sense—Mr. Bright alluded to the pervading presence of the unexpected in human affairs. ‘What happens is the unexpected.’ Certainly the politicians, if any, have reason to speak of the uncertainty of things in general. The result of the last General Election was to spring a mine beneath the feet of the party in power. The result, both of that election and of the previous election, was a dramatic surprise. The only thing which we can expect in English politics is the unexpected. However acutely we may survey the field of politics, no one can forecast what will be the next great question, or when that question will emerge. What happens in the broad field of politics is true in the limited field of individual experience. To use Plato’s fine image, the State is the individual written large, and the individual is the State written small. The State is the individual seen through a magnifying lens, and the individual is the State seen through a diminishing lens. It may be worth our while to examine some of the aspects of the phenomena of the unexpected. We shall be mainly dealing with truisms; but truisms are just the things that require analysing and enforcing. I think it is Carlyle who says that what we need is to take to heart our copy-book sentences. We shall endeavour to discuss the matter, although, like *Rasselas*, we

come to ‘a conclusion in which nothing is concluded.’ Very often that kind of conclusion is not a bad one. It will at least serve for a peg whereon to hang some social and literary illustrations.

Now be it observed that this element of unexpectedness ought to be a matter of expectation. Chance prevails to so large an extent in human life, that we may be sure that the presence of chance is not a matter of chance. It forms a part of the scheme and economy of human life. We truly speak of the ‘changes and chances of this mortal life.’ Without this element, life, as at present constituted, would be insipid. We might all just as well huddle up the day’s business, and go to bed at nine o’clock. The necessity arises of our always allowing a margin for this element. This is an aphorism. In dynamics the practical results are always below the mathematical results. The friction, of which science cannot make an accurate forecast, only a tolerable guess, explains the difference. Now you cannot make sure of the exact time it will take you to get to London Bridge. There will probably be a block in the street, or some other unexpected delay. There comes that proverbial slip between the cup and the lip. There comes some unexpected interference with the regularity of events. You can’t make watches keep time, and still less can you make railway trains keep time. Life is full of hitches, that is to say, of unexpectednesses. Luckily, they don’t all come at

once; they may be smoothed down in detail. The business of life is to encounter each difficulty as it emerges, and to do the best with it. No doubt, but in this way the unexpected will have its intellectual and moral uses. When an emergency arises, the mind is thrown back on its resources. There is a demand on our fertility of invention, on our contrivance and alertness. We collect our mental forces to deal with the impending difficulty. Similarly we find abundant room for our patience, our faith, our energy, our hopefulness, when some great unexpected event comes looming through the mist of life. It is thus seen that the unexpected occupies an important element in the discipline of our existence.

One of the most mournful instances of the unexpected is the sudden incursion of disease. This is pretty certain to happen to most men at one time or another. Several very strange cases have come within my own observation. I do not wish to be an alarmist; but I have known of cases where people who have imprudently partaken of fish, have died in consequence; and where these unexpected cases have entirely eluded medical observation and analysis. For instance, there is that remarkable fish called the *torpedo*, which is found in British waters, and whose effects have been unaccountably neglected by medical men. It is very good eating, except the roe, which is deadly poison. This extraordinary fish curiously corresponds to a Voltaic pile. Its upper surface is described as being similar to the copper plate of a galvanic battery, while the lower surface is exactly like the zinc plate. In the larger specimens, no less than one thousand one hundred columns may be counted. There is not a

single word in the many books about poison which describes the poisonous roe of the torpedo. Works of medical science are peculiarly rich in the phenomena of the unexpected, and there are yet many curious additions to be made.

The telegraphic message is the outward sign of the unexpected. I confess I dislike getting telegrams, although one gets them more and more. To the present day, I have not been able to overcome some of the shocks which I experienced during their earlier use. Now the use is much more common. Pleasant messages may come, an invitation to a party for instance; but just as probably it is something to put the party off. At the present day, telegrams are largely superseding letters, and social life soon falls into the grooves of business life. But there are still multitudes of old-fashioned people to whom the telegram simply means the unexpected. All tidings respecting battle, murder, and sudden death come by the telegram. Clerks in the telegraph offices are, very properly, bound and sworn to secrecy. Copies of all messages are kept, and would form an immense library, a vast storehouse of incidents of the unexpected.

The unexpected is that which gives a salt to life. We are all on the look-out for it. There is a little corner of romance left in the heart of every man. This is the reason why we all throw open the newspaper and look at the intelligence in prominent type just after the leaders. In pictures and stories, in news and novels, it is always the incident of the unexpected which is brought before us.

Let me illustrate this the more by telling a little story of the unexpected. I do this the rather as the incident is romantic, and

also true, and is concerned with a very interesting matter in literary history.

All my readers know—most of them know by heart—Tennyson's charming ballad of the Lord of Burleigh. It is an interesting story and a true story; that is to say, in the main outline, although poetic treatment, as is generally the case, has interfered with the details. A few persons connected with this story, or who know the details from the principal persons, are still alive, and from them I have obtained the facts.

The Lord of Burleigh is, of course, the Marquis of Exeter, who married a poor cottager. He was an amateur artist, indeed; but he was not the youthful artist delineated by the poet Tennyson. Lord Exeter was a widower. He had been unhappily married, and divorced from his wife by Act of Parliament. He was a man who used to lay aside all the trappings of rank, and betake himself to quiet ways of wandering about the country to paint. In this guise he used to wander through various secluded districts; and many of the wise among us know the rest and quiet which such solitary wanderings give. He made friends of the peasantry folk, and became on great terms of intimacy with some of the humble people. Our readers will recollect that something of this kind was the case with a Lord Byron and a Lord Aberdeen. There was one poor cottage where he was especially made welcome, and which, for two or three years, he made his head-quarters. It so happened that, in the course of these wanderings, Lord Exeter fell ill. In his favourite cottage he was nursed and well cared for. One of those who attended the sick peer with the greatest kindness and attention was a daugh-

ter of the house, a young girl of fifteen. The sick man was greatly touched by this kindness and attention. It is a curious fact that your middle-aged man often falls in love with quite a young girl; and it is a still more curious fact that the young girl will just as often, or as seldom, fall in love with the middle-aged man. It is not till after the marriage that the radical incongruity between May and December is made apparent. Lord Exeter determined to make the young girl his bride, and enthrone her in state at 'Burleigh House by Stamford town.' Things, however, were not exactly managed as set forth in the lyric. Lord Exeter thought that his future wife was both too young and too uneducated for her great position. The young lady was sent to a good school, and received an excellent training. All this time he religiously preserved the secret of his rank. They were married; and then came the great sensational surprise of his declaring his rank and welcoming her as the Lady of Burleigh. The melancholy conclusion of Tennyson's ballad is, in the main, true enough. The young girl thus married had several children, and then she faded away. Perhaps it was, as the poet says, 'through the burden of a greatness to which she was not born.' Perhaps it was not only the inequality of station, but the inequality of age and tastes. Such is the true story of this romantic and famous marriage. It comes to me indirectly through a brother of the bride, an unbeneficed clergyman of the Church of England, who, though sent to college at the expense of his brother-in-law, had reasons for afterwards refusing promotion from the Exeter family. He was for many years curate of Sefton, near Liverpool. The

bride's name was the unpoetical one of Sarah Hoggins, as may be verified by a reference to the *Peerage*.

Of course the subject of marriage opens up an immense field of instances. It is not so unexpected when an old man marries a young lady; but when an old lady marries a young man, this is certainly an example of the unexpected. I will just at random put down the last two marriage stories that I have heard. An old gentleman of rank very indiscreetly stopped to chat with a pretty girl behind a counter. Barmaids are often a silly set, and do not care to talk with old gentlemen. They reserve their conversation for young men, who are the horror of bar-proprietors, who will spend a few coppers in beer, and consume whole hours of time. This girl had the sense to recognise a sensible man, and she had some rational talk with him. When he got home he discovered that he had lost his purse, containing a considerable sum in notes and gold. He was entirely unable to recollect where he had lost the purse. But going some days after to the refreshment counter, the young lady handed him back the money, saying that she had been anxiously looking out for an opportunity of restoring it. The old gentleman was a baronet of good estate, and became so captivated with the young person that he proposed to her, and was accepted; and, after an interval of time to allow her to see something of the world and of good society, they were happily married. The other case is still more extraordinary. A young girl was brought before a 'sitting magistrate' for being drunk and disorderly. It was a regular case of King Cophtua and the beggar-maid. Her extraordinary beauty shone out

through her rags and disorder. Her fine eyes and vivacious speech captivated the aged Rhadamanthus. I believe he paid the five shillings himself, and caused her to be well taken care of. They married, and, in course of time, she was left a widow with a title and fortune. She was thought, in after life, to take rather a magisterial view of things in general, and developed into a character of severe type. Altogether she was an extreme instance of the unexpected.

The unexpected always forms the crisis, *dénouement*. In novels, dramas, poems, the unexpected is the hinge on which the story turns. In all cases of circumstantial evidence it is some little matter, which has been overlooked and unexpected, which clears up the mystery and superinduces poetical justice. A murderer walks away with his victim's hat and leaves his own, and this leads to his apprehension. Some very clever forgers neglect some very simple and obvious detail in the forged bills, and this leads to their apprehension. Some forty thousand men are put to death, because, just as foreigners have a difficulty with our *th*, they could not pronounce the word *Shibboleth*. In the opinion of the Darwinites a slight protuberance in the human ear, which every one had neglected, satisfactorily proves that we are descended from the apes. The political skies of Europe were never so clear as when that famous row at Ems brought on the Franco-German war.

You will find that there is some little thing quite unexpected which has determined the character of some great thing. It was the unexpected loss of that celebrated nail which first lost the steed and then the rider. Mr. Hoby, the bootmaker, attri-

buted the success of the Duke of Wellington's career to the boots he made for him. Mr. Hoby justly argued that there is nothing like a pair of easy boots to promote serenity of feeling and the easy play of a noble mind. If his boots had pinched him, the Duke, with an irritated foot, would not have been able to show the matchless patience and endurance of that hard-fought day. Napoleon was not at all well on that memorable occasion—I believe it was a touch of the chronic complaint which eventually carried him off—and the unexpected incursion of illness would have been a great hindrance to him, though I verily believe that it would have made no difference in the victory. But kings and conquerors have been frequently laid up on the eve of momentous events by a sudden incursion of the gout, which has depressed their spirits and damped their resolution. From no human equation can you eliminate that unknown factor, the most mysterious of all, the unexpected.

One of the great charms in travelling is this element of the unexpected. In this respect reside the change and the novelty. You set out, for instance, for a long day's ramble in a country that is only known to you by repute, by books, and by conversation. I gratefully look back upon many such journeys. After the middle-aged period of life there are not many surprises for us, not so very much of the unexpected. And here let me give a practical hint to my middle-aged contemporaries. Walk while you can; it will be time to ride when you can no longer walk. Again: do the valleys and mountains while you may; it will be time to live the life of cities and watering-places when you can no

longer wander by the river-side, through the dark defiles, or climb the mountain-peaks. The youngsters pass us by; they do so with a lightly-scornful smile, thinking, perhaps, that we middle-aged ones are so old that we are only fit to be put to death; but still we often possess a certain amount of perseverance and staying-power that will bring us to the desired point in time, while perhaps the juniors turn back in disgust, dismayed 'by the greatness of the way.'

Now the unexpected constantly befalls one in long rambles. Yesterday I took a long ramble in the Pyrenees, along one of the admirable national roads. I had made up my mind and my body for long toil under the vertical sun, to be rewarded by the sharper air and the broader horizon. But for the greater part of the way the road had been cut through a forest that clothed the mountain-side. At times I passed through great cathedral aisles, and then through a trellis-work of light and shadow woven by the sunlight and the branches. The path has many turnings and windings as you pass through its convolutions around the mountains, and at times seems lost amid the folds of the hills. Now and then a mist drops like the curtain of a theatre, and obliterates the view. You draw nearer and nearer to that mist. You are within fifty yards of it, within five yards; now you are in it. You are within a rainy cloud, passing through a dense dew. You just see a few yards before you, and that is all. You literally live for the moment. You are literally obliged to take short views in life. You realise practically and physically the words, which you may have often applied to your human history:

'I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me.'

Then, suddenly, the mist lifts. It is torn and riven by the sun-lights. The mists disappear; while some little white clouds, turned to lustrous silver in the light, wander aimlessly in the upper valleys, or rest beneath the mountain-crags. When you have climbed up a mountain, through many a zigzag and through perilous paths of shale and through immense boulders, seeing nothing before you, as you settle your collar to the work, but the beetling height overhead—however often you may have done this sort of thing, there is always a sensation of the unexpected when at last you attain the panoramic view. How well I recall that view from the summit of the Monte Generoso, when some fifteen lakes are outspread between you and the distant mountain-walls! There are no lakes in the Pyrenees, none properly so called, only deep mountain tarns, not larger than those of our own Westmoreland lakes, but, O, of how intense a blue or green! They are small, and they are not many. Still there are districts in the Pyrenees where you may find, in the elevated region of snow and glaciers, some fifteen or eighteen of such lakes. Boon Nature can thus give us our freshest and keenest impressions, when perhaps we had mournfully told ourselves that the very faculty of being impressed was fast departing from us. And for this it is unnecessary to go to foreign lands or to the more famous scenes of our own. I often take a railway ticket to some station a dozen miles away, and work my way back to headquarters through some range of country hitherto unexplored. And there is one great overpowering charm which no other landscape

can possess. You are breathing English air and treading English soil. You must have lived away from England for some time before you can appreciate how much you owe her or fully understand the wondrous working of the charm. And so rich is our island home in its infinite diversity that I can never wander for the dozen miles without experiencing some touch of that mystic charm of the unexpected.

The time and spot where I am writing form an example of the unexpected. Yesterday I made the ascent of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre. It happened this way. A few days ago I was staying at the favourite hostel at Gavarnie, the resort of so many Pyrenean travellers. There I had the pleasure of meeting with Count Henry Russell, the most intrepid and famous of Pyrenean explorers, and Dr. Ball, our greatest authority on Switzerland and one of the greatest on Swiss travel. Count Russell strongly urged on me the unique magnificence of the panoramic view from the Pic du Midi, and considered it the best in the whole range of the Pyrenees. The day but one after, we started from Baréges, and succeeded in a slow but sure way in making the ascent. There is a resting-place an hour and a half below the summit, a little *hôtellerie*, perhaps the highest inhabited spot in Europe. We were strongly urged to spend the night at the hotel, and to go up the next morning at half-past three to see the sun rise. On the other hand, it was a lovely afternoon, and we can hardly trust the weather on the high mountains. Accordingly we climbed to the topmost point of the mountain. Most magnificent was the view. It was impossible to count the hundreds of gleaming peaks, most of them with

slabs or sprinklings of snow, and many with glaciers and waterfalls. Towards the south the mists were rising over the vast plain of France, which resembled a tumbled sea. But southward the whole range of French and Spanish Pyrenees were seen with remarkable distinctness, the huge Maladetta, which is often invisible, coming clearly out. Then the sunshine fell, in the setting, on the gray of the granite, the green of the hills, the white of the snow, with brilliant and remarkable effect; and, as we groped our way down through the twilight, the full moon arose, larger and more beautiful than in our northern skies.

We slept that night in our aerial abode, in a cell whose walls were of granite, more monklike than the chamber which I stayed in at the Simplon Hospice the year before. This inn is itself a very unexpected circumstance, and like none other that I have ever known. It was originally built by some kindly philanthropists of Barèges for the rest and refreshment of those who might be exhausted and fatigued upon the great mountain. To the present day they receive the poor, and give them food and lodging gratuitously. But they have added some comforts and conveniences, and make out a regular hotel-bill for tourists. Last night, as I lay awake, I heard the wind rising and moaning. In the morning there was a heavy rain, and a deep mist lay over the valleys and over the deep lakes, and over the scattered snows that lay far beneath us. I am detained for hours before I can with safety venture through perilous paths upon the valley; and so, having time on my hands on this unexpected occasion, I appropriately resume my essay on the unexpected.

Yet I should like to add a word or two more about the time and spot. This little inn is a most unexpected kind of inn. It is a curious combination of the scientific and the philanthropic. On the summit of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre there was at this time rapidly approaching completion an observatory of a very unique character. It had been in progress for some years, and while it was in progress the observations were carried on at the little inn or hospice. It will be the highest existing observatory. It is just a few yards below the very summit. There are excavations made in the earth, whither perhaps the observatory folk will have to retreat at times. They were eagerly studying all the questions relating to the support of life at a great altitude during the winter. They had carefully studied all the records relating to Arctic voyages. A large number of explorers and scientists had come up to the inn on the day of my visit. Unexpectedly I found myself in the midst of a considerable detachment of the French Alpine Club. The extreme inclemency of the day seemed to put the matter of the ascent entirely out of the question; but it is to be hoped that they would enjoy a banquet, for which large preparations had been made. A number of them had toiled up the mountain the previous night, and where they might have slept was a matter of curious conjecture, for I believe we had secured the only bedroom. We had turned out of the *salle-à-manger*, that beds might be made up. Various members of the Alpine Club seemed very anxious that their observatory should be known and appreciated in England.

So frequent a factor is the unexpected in human life, that we

find illustrations of it in every path of literature, in every range of experience. Let us take some illustrations. Take the case when some sudden idea rushes into the mind. How interesting is Watt's account of his Sunday afternoon walk across the Green at Glasgow, when the idea of the improvement of the steam-engine suddenly burst upon him! 'I had gone,' he says, 'to take a walk on a fine Sabbath afternoon. I had entered the Green by the gate at the foot of Charlotte-street, and had passed the old washing-house. I was thinking upon the engine at the time, and had got as far as the herd's house, when the idea came into my mind that as steam was an elastic body it would rush into a vacuum; and if a communication were made between the cylinder and an exhausted vessel, it would rush into it, and might there be condensed without cooling the cylinder. I had not walked further than the Golf-house, when the whole thing was arranged in my mind.' By this thought all the conditions of the existing steam-engine were changed, and it was adapted to work the greatest industrial revolution of our time. How interesting, again, was the first discovery of those vast central waters of Africa, the first gleam of the inland seas, which will produce vast results hereafter! 'What is that streak of light which lies below?' inquired Burton. 'I am of opinion,' was the answer, 'that it is the water.' At first the traveller, with dimmed weary eyes, hardly recognised the greatness and grandeur of the vision. 'Advancing, however, a few yards, the whole scene suddenly burst upon my view, filling me with admiration, wonder, and delight.' The water lay beneath the tropic sun in the lap of the tall steel-coloured mountains. The east wind broke

the surface into crisp wavelets, which fell on gleaming sand bordered by sedgy rushes. The full length could not be seen, but the breadth appeared from thirty to thirty-five miles. The waters were populous with canoes, and the shores of the lake were lined with native villages. These waters were always beautiful, and reminded the travellers of the soft scenery of the Mediterranean. This was a great 'moment,' the greatness of which has still to be fully recognised in modern history.

Let me take a final illustration from travel, and this time nearer home. I have been looking at the French version of De Amicis' *Recollections of London and Paris*. His sympathies rather go with Paris, to which he has devoted the bulk of his book. His feelings in visiting London were simply those of stupefaction. It loomed upon him in all the vague mystery and magnitude of the unexpected. Turin, Florence, and Venice are mere country villages in the comparison, where people live a quiet united family life. He shuddered when he was turned out of the vast terminus into the awful endless streets. He was most of all impressed with the view from Westminster Bridge, which he thought surpassed the view from any of the Paris bridges. The London parks astonished him. The pretty children, with golden hair and fresh complexions, playing in the parks, astonished him most of all. He moved about dazed, in a sort of dream. He passed with profound indifference objects in museums and libraries for which he would have given anything to examine leisurely at home. He is almost appalled when Greenwich has the population of Florence, Chelsea that of Rome, Hackney that of Marseilles. He is good enough not to remind us

that there is a difference of a certain kind between Greenwich and Florence, Chelsea and Rome. The riches, the greatness, the order of London struck him very forcibly. He almost wished himself a Londoner, that he might look down upon the Italians. There is something very frank and generous in the tone in which he speaks of us, the more so as there are so many weak points in our system on which foreigners might justly be severe. His chief complaint is respecting the sombreness of the streets—too much monotony, too much incongruity, that there is too much rain, too severe a Sunday. As he steams down the Thames, through the docks, his astonishment reaches its climax; it is London before you, London behind you, London around you; evermore this immense London. It is not simply the port of London; it is the port of every region, the centre of the world's commerce, the bond of union between the people of every race and every zone. The unexpectedness of impressions of foreign travel has rarely been drawn out in a livelier and more natural way than by De Amicis and his French translator, Madame Colomb.

In the disclosures of social life we sometimes obtain picturesque glimpses of the unexpected. Sometimes favourable circumstances are developed where they might be least expected. A good many stories might be told of incidents which happen to people who take lodgings or go into a boarding-house. A curious case might be cited from the recent memoirs of Mr. Buckle, the historian. He thought that he would go and live out of town, and fixed upon Blackheath, 'determined by the shady avenues of the fine Spanish chestnuts in Greenwich Park.' His friend Mr. Capel thus

describes what happened. 'His landlady, who has been a widow four or five years, turned out a somewhat remarkable person. She reads Italian, quotes Tasso and Dante, is well up in French, and knows its literature, and when necessary can produce Virgil and Cicero. In manner she is very much of the gentlewoman. So you will not wonder that in the evening, after dinner, he sometimes drops the *solitaire* and invites her to converse, as he takes his ease on the lawn in the shade behind the house.'

I suppose most of my readers have read the recent *Life of Bishop Wilberforce*. In one of his letters to his most favourite correspondent, the Bishop gives a curious account of a journey which he made in a state carriage from Cambridge to London, in company with Baron and Baroness Bunsen, Count Waldemar, and Sir Robert Peel. The Bishop writes: 'I had a very curious observation of Sir R. Peel. He was reading the *Quarterly*, and soon settled into Croker's bitter attack upon him, peeping into its uncut leaves with intense interest, and yet not liking to show that interest by cutting; and so, when Madame Bunsen, who saw nothing of what was going on, offered a paper-cutter, courteously declining it, and lapsing into an article on Pantagruelism, to fall again into the old article and peep again into the uncut leaves as soon as all was quiet.' How well I can imagine the scene! The proud sensitive ex-Premier affecting indifference while he writhed under the attack; while the keen, shrewd, busy glance of the Bishop, which some of us knew so well, was watching, noting, analysing all the time. There was some degree of likeness between the two men. Samuel Wilberforce would have made a

good premier, and Sir Robert would not have made a bad bishop. After reading the memoirs of both, I cannot help feeling conscious, I will not say of a moral obliquity, but of a moral near-sightedness in the case of each illustrious personage. I do not profess to blame, but at the same time I am quite unable to comprehend the behaviour of Sir Robert Peel towards the Tory party, the behaviour of Bishop Wilberforce towards Dr. Hampden. But here what happens is the unexpected. Suppose even an angel could have drawn aside the veil of futurity, and have shown those two travellers sitting opposite each other in the state carriage the self-same fate lying in wait for them. To each the stumbling footfall of a beast was to prove fatal. To one on the fashionable London slope, to the other on the Evershed Roughs in the sweet countryside, came the sudden transition of what men call sheer accident. And the Bishop tells the story of Sir Robert's slyness without thinking that the relentless press will tell the story of his own slyness in detecting that slyness; and yet, methinks, it was very innocent slyness on either side. The memory of each great man will always be associated with the unexpected.

We may draw an instance of the unexpected from another region of literature. The Bishop of Durham says that the greatest literary 'find' of the last two or three centuries is that of the lost epistle of St. Clement of Rome. The first epistle is found with most mss. of the New Testament; for instance, with that famous Alexandrine Codex, which is kept under lock and key at the British Museum. A certain Greek bishop Briennios found it, written on parchment in cursive characters in

the library of the Most Holy Sepulchre in Fanor of Constantinople, and published it forthwith. The book excited an immense amount of attention, and evoked quite a literature of its own. Our own dignitaries gave a most cordial reception to a work which seems to draw closer the bonds between the Greek and Anglican Churches. But it never rains but it pours. To quote Bishop Lightfoot's language, 'the students of early patristic literature had scarcely realised the surprise' when it was announced the University of Cambridge had secured by purchase a ms. containing the two epistles in a Syriac version. The treasure belonged to the late Oriental scholar, M. Jules Mohl of Paris. The greatest instances of such 'finds' of literary and historical value are, of course, the discovery of the Catacombs and the discovery of Herculaneum and Pompeii. A very curious instance of the unexpected is to be found in a letter of M. Guizot to his daughter Pauline, to be read in the recently published volume, *M. Guizot in Private Life*. 'I had two adventures at Windsor. Here is my second adventure. On Wednesday evening at Windsor the Queen retired at eleven o'clock; we stayed behind talking for half an hour. At midnight I set out to find my own apartment, and I lose myself in the galleries, saloons, and corridors. At last I slowly open a door, taking it for mine, and I see a lady beginning to undress, attended by her maid. I shut the door as fast as I can, and begin again to search for my own room. I at last find some one who shows me the way. I go to bed. The next day at dinner the Queen said to me laughingly, "Do you know that you entered my room at midnight?" "How, ma'am? Was it

your Majesty's door that I half opened?" "Certainly." And she began laughing again, and so did I. I told her of my perplexity, which she had already guessed; and I asked whether, if, like St. Simon or Sully, I should ever write my memoirs, she would allow me to mention that I had opened the Queen of England's door in Windsor Castle while she was going to bed. She gave me permission, and laughed heartily.

We should not have ventured to quote this extract unless her Majesty's permission had been given.

The facts of our mental and spiritual life produce strange phenomena of the unexpected. You may find discussions on these subjects in those philosophical writers who have treated of the association of ideas, or the theologians who have written such books as honest Newton's *Concliphoria*. There you may read of the mists and storms that may obscure and devastate human nature. From the spiritualistic point of view you can hardly help being convinced of the doctrine of good and evil angels. A man shows himself both better and worse than himself. Suddenly there is an incursion of dark thoughts. Old facts, that seemed buried away in the oldest and farthest depths of consciousness, start into life. Evil suggestions and monstrous fancies are offered with sudden distinctness. You are overwhelmed for the moment when these moral abysses yawn before your moral nature, when hopelessness and dismay seem to gather overhead, as the heaving crags of a mountain-gorge. You perceive, with a suddenness of surprise, what unexpected possibilities of evil will exist. Or, perhaps, the reverse may strangely and sweetly hap-

pen. You may suddenly become conscious of a sweet and gracious effluence. As upon a summer evening the sense of hearing may become suddenly sharpened, and you hear everything with unwonted keen distinctness, so a latent spiritual sense, so often latent, seems to awake suddenly. You appear to grasp the modern facts of life in their reality and their relationship. Your perversity of mind, your moodiness of temper, seem to vanish suddenly. A spirit of calm has fallen upon the restless mind. A spirit of exaltation has alighted on the debased heart, gasping and moaning in its recollections and anticipations. A sort of music awakes in the soul. Hope, with her anchor and her star, is present once more. There is a sense of intellectual and spiritual effluence in these moments which are sometimes called 'moments of inspiration.' They are not transitory; but, in their effect, lift us into a higher state of existence. Perhaps the phenomenon in these that strikes us most is the suddenness and the unexpectedness.

Then illnesses and accidents, with the mention of which I started on this devious essay, are matters which, by the patient indeed, are regarded as instances of the most unpleasant form of the unexpected. Strictly speaking, this is not altogether the case with illnesses, for there is a true aphorism which says that all acute diseases are chronic diseases—that is to say, that they are the organised results of certain antecedents. But the unexpectedness of the accident is altogether unmitigated. Then think of the railway accident, against which the most prudent and far-sighted man cannot possess any guarantee. Perhaps the reader may know the different accounts of a railway accident

given by the late Charles Dickens and by Bishop Ellicott. O, those sad changes and chances of life ! The blooming maiden—so I heard the story—gets in at the railway station for a two miles' ride to meet her doom. But of course volumes might be written on railway accidents alone, perhaps the most frequent and disastrous of all illustrations of the 'unexpected.

But to get back to the simple philosophy of our subject. Its main purport has already been indicated. We must attune our minds to an attitude that recognises the changes and chances. We must make allowance for their coming—must anticipate them, and leave a margin. Forewarned, we are forearmed. We need not be taken by surprise if the unexpected comes in the most unexpected form. There is such a thing as a quiet courage in human life, when we fear no evil because the heart is fixed. There is such a thing as being fully settled as respects the great issues of life and death, and being able to modulate all details with reference to the supreme governing principles of life. Then will come

that supreme unexpected event which Richard Hooker calls 'our own uncertain time of most assured departure.' No wise man will leave that contingency out of his speculations. One day I was talking with an eminent conveyancing solicitor. 'The one thing against which we have to guard,' said the man of law, 'is the contingency of the demise.' We know what he meant by this delicate veiling of the phrase. Happily, this is the contingency for which every preparation may be made. We live in the ages of grace; we have faith in a Redemption. In that faith may we so live and die that the unexpected may not be the unwelcome !

'What can we do o'er whom the unbel-
holden

Hangs in a night with which we can-
not cope ?

What but look onward, and with faces
golden

Speak to each other softly of a hope ?

Can it be true, the grace He is declar-
ing ?

O, let us trust Him, for His words are
fair.

Man, what is this, and why art thou
despairing ?

God will forgive thee all but thy de-
spair.'

AMONG THE HEATHER.

A Highland Story.

BY A. C. HERTFORD.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'She had just time to look up and smile.'

HALIBURTON.

'Though men may fall in love with girls at play, there is nothing to make them stand to their love like seeing them at work.'

COBBETT.

WHEN once Madge had got the turn, she began to mend very quickly. Soon she was allowed to sit up for a little while in the large armchair beside her own fire; then she was told she might venture down-stairs for a short time each day, and hopes were even held out that if she continued to behave properly she might soon go for a drive.

Those were happy times; for a few days' complete rest soon restored Mrs. Grant to her usual health. Madge daily made strides in health and spirits; even the weather was propitious, for it bestowed on them in generous measure its very finest quality of October sunshine, often one of the most delightful months of the year.

Norah was bravely trying to fight out her own particular troubles, and, if possible, to forget them entirely, by bestowing a double amount of attention on home duties. Easier said than done, though. Once or twice lately she had felt sure her mother had guessed her secret, but never since the first night had it been touched on between them.

One day she was seated at

work beside Madge, in their cosy little drawing-room; it was late on in the morning, and ever since breakfast she had been amusing the little invalid with story after story, till at last, glancing up, she discovered that she was unfolding her store to the furniture alone, for Madge had fallen peacefully asleep. Norah quietly worked on without disturbing her, till her mother entered the room, and then held up a finger warningly, pointing to the child. Mrs. Grant came noiselessly up and gently folded Madge's shawl closer round her, while she whispered,

'You had better go out for a turn, dear; I will sit by Madge till you come back; don't hurry.'

Norah demurred. She had not cared for many walks during her sister's illness, and to-day felt more inclined to stay at home. There was nowhere to go to, she urged, and a walk without an object was so uninteresting. But Mrs. Grant stood firm. She smilingly pointed to a vase full of not over-fresh flowers.

'Go and see what you can find to replenish those, dear; the walk will do you good, I know.'

So Norah gave in; and once out in the fresh autumn air she felt that her mother was right: she did require the walk, and already felt better for it; her head was beginning to get muddled with staying so much indoors.

She bent her steps towards a

pretty little flower-shop in the Bayswater-road, to see what late flowers could still be found there for Madge.

Norah was quite accustomed to walking alone, and usually rather enjoyed it; but of late she had sought communion with her own thoughts as little as possible, they had proved so very unsatisfactory. This morning, try as she would, back came those tiresome obtrusive recollections, always forcing themselves where they were not wanted, always getting pushed to one side, and locked out at the back-door, only to come crowding round with renewed force to the front again. Ever since she knew Geoffrey had returned to London, Norah had indulged almost unconsciously in just the very faintest hope that, knowing how ill her sister had been, he might perhaps come to inquire after her. And often lately, when the bell rang at some unusual time, she would start and look up, almost expecting to see him enter. Once or twice Madge had remarked on this, and innocently asked if she expected any one. Ah, if she could only have known how ready, how more than ready, Geoffrey was to come without any pretext whatever! Had he thought for a moment that she would care to see him, how different would her feelings have been! But it is these many 'ifs' in life that help to make up its puzzles. However, it is always a comfort to remember that, if we only wait patiently, everything will come right some day. Yet at two-and-twenty 'some day' seems very far off; almost as far indeed as it did to us years ago, when our mother told us children to wait patiently for some coveted treasure: perhaps if we were good we should 'some day' get it! That answer used always to sound highly unsatisfactory; yet the 'some day' usually

arrived in the end, and often when the treasure was actually ours we ceased to care for it.

Norah strolled on, reached the shop, bought her flowers, and began to retrace her steps, for she did not feel inclined for a very long walk this morning. She was almost at home, when a voice sounded in her ear, so familiar, so closely connected with her thoughts, that involuntarily she started. Yes, there stood Geoffrey face to face with her! Quickly her hand was held out, and warmly and heartily shaken. In the surprise and pleasure of meeting, Norah had not thought of guarding her feelings, and there was no mistaking the look of pleasure on her face as she recognised Geoffrey. He noticed it at once, and a thrill of hope and joy shot through his heart as he did so. Could this meeting really have given her pleasure? and if so—that other thought seemed too good to be true!

'Will you let Lassie and me see you safely home, Miss Grant?' he proposed; 'I think you do not live far from here, and I want to ask you about your sister.'

O Geoffrey, what a hypocrite you are!

'Yes,' said Norah, trying to speak naturally and calmly, and to still the thumps her stupid heart *would* give, 'in Addison-gardens; we are nearly there now. O, thanks,' as Geoffrey conveyed the flowers from her hands to his own; 'those are for Madge, she is so fond of flowers.'

'Does she like fruit, too?' inquired Geoffrey, who just now would have enjoyed nothing better than feasting the whole world round, he felt so light of heart.

'O yes; I am afraid she would eat just as much of it as she could get; and now she is growing better it is such a treat to her.'

'Then may I bring her some pears to-morrow? Pears and grapes, they could not hurt her; and I know my mother has some fine ones at home; it will be a mercy to help us to eat them.'

'Yes,' with her eyes fixed on the ground; Norah 'thought Madge might eat them; it would be very kind.'

Lassie wondered much why her master walked so very slowly this morning—generally he would have got over the distance in half the time; but he looked perfectly happy, so the faithful beast was satisfied.

Geoffrey soon said, 'Have you often heard from our friends in the Highlands, Miss Grant? I can assure you, we missed you sadly after your departure.' Common-place words, but the tone meant a good deal.

Norah told him her news; and he asked after every one by name. He furtively watched her face as she mentioned Percival; in spite of herself her colour rose, and Geoffrey gave a little sigh and walked on rather more quietly than before. He could not make it out; she had seemed so really glad to see him; and yet, what could she mean by colouring up in this way the moment Percival's name was mentioned? There must be some reason for it. How earnestly he wished Percival had never thought of taking him into his confidence, or else had confided in him a little farther, and had informed him of the results of his hopes! However, this was not the time or place to reason out the matter, and, making an effort, he quitted the subject of the Highlands, and they chatted away on ordinary topics till Norah's home was reached. She had quite regained her self-possession, and, as he handed her the flowers at her own door, invited him in to see her

mother just as quietly and naturally as she would have done the merest stranger. But Geoffrey could not accept the invitation to-day—he must hasten home, or he should keep his mother waiting for lunch; but to-morrow—might he call to-morrow, when he brought the fruit?

Norah said yes, they would be glad to see him; and just because she felt so glad, she made her answer sound rather cold, from her very fear of its being warmer than was maidenly.

'Yes, you are very weak, I am afraid,' quoth Geoffrey to himself, as he stalked homewards. 'But I couldn't help it. She did seem pleased to see me, and yet that pleasure may have been quite apart from any deeper feeling. No doubt, if she met her grandfather out walking, she would be pleased. Still—ah, well, my dog, you and I have had a pleasant walk, at all events.'

I think if Lassie could have answered, she might have said, 'Speak for yourself, dear master; you never even bestowed one word on me!'

Mrs. Grant looked up as Norah entered.

'I am glad you took such a long walk; you have got a nice colour, and look quite a different girl. How far did you go?'

'Only to the flower-shop. Have I been long away?' she asked rather absently; and in a minute added, 'I met Mr. Lindsay, mother, as I was returning, and he walked home with me. He wishes to bring Madge some fruit to-morrow, and I told him you would be pleased to see him.'

Mrs. Grant just glanced up once, then said cheerfully, 'Quite right, dear; I shall be so glad to know him. How kind to think of Madge! Lunch will be ready in two minutes; I should advise

you to run up and get ready ;' and, thankful to hide her blushes, Norah escaped.

The next day brought Geoffrey, Lassie, and a large basket of fruit and flowers, which all combined to fill Madge's soul with delight. First, she had a gentleman caller all to herself ; for had not Norah distinctly told her that Mr. Lindsay was coming to see *her* ? Had she been three or four years older she might perhaps have doubted the truth of this statement. Then Lassie, who had been shut out on the doorstep to begin with, was called in, and put through endless tricks for her edification, some of which made her laugh till the tears ran down her cheeks ; and she had fruit and flowers enough to last her for a week.

When Geoffrey saw Norah yesterday, the surprise of meeting had given her a colour ; but to-day, as he sat in the little drawing-room, by way of chatting with Mrs. Grant, his eyes constantly wandered to the daughter's face ; and he saw now what before he had not noticed, that it looked pale and worn with watching and anxiety. There were some dark lines under the eyes, too, which he did not remember seeing there ; but in his eyes she only looked ten times sweeter, lovelier, more womanly than ever. He did not want a wife who could only smile and sing and dance ; but a true woman, whose graces would shine as brightly in the little home-circle as in society, whose qualities would brighten the shady, as well as the sunny, side of life ; and he felt, as he watched Norah to-day, that in her he saw all that he most admired in woman combined—gentle and loving, cheerful and unselfish ; a girl with a high principle guiding all her actions, else these qualities could not be.

Once in the course of his call Madge moved restlessly on her sofa, and he saw Norah quietly rise, shake up the pillow, place it more comfortably, and the younger pull down the elder sister's hand and give it a quiet squeeze by way of thanks. There was no obtrusive display of affection on Norah's part—no fussy ways ; but he read this in a pleasanter manner in the loving glances Madge occasionally shot towards her sister, and the contented look on her face when Norah was seated near. Geoffrey, as I say, noticed all this, and quietly made a note of it in his memory. Small things tell character, and a straw will show which way the wind is blowing. As he sat in that little drawing-room, he remembered a conversation he and Fanny had held the morning after Norah's arrival at Robin Lodge. Truly the kind little lady had not overpraised her friend when speaking of the latter's home-life ; and he found himself picturing her in another home, making the light and sunshine of it, as she did of this, till he suddenly became aware that Mrs. Grant had twice addressed a remark to him without obtaining any answer.

After a somewhat lengthy call, he took his departure. As he rose to go, he said,

'Mrs. Grant, my mother would much like to call on you ; may she ? And would your daughter be allowed to take a drive soon ? Our old horses are very steady, and go so slowly that I do not think it could hurt her.'

Madge's eyes beamed ; after a few weeks' illness the idea of the open air does sound delightful ; so, holding out this pleasant possibility as an inducement to get well quickly, Geoffrey bade them good-bye.

'I think that is the very

'nicest person I have ever seen,' remarked Madge, as the door closed on him. 'What a long time he stayed too, more than half an hour by that clock!'

Mrs. Grant laughed at the warmth of her tone.

'My dear, it is not good manners to time your friends' calls.'

'But, mother, don't you like him?'

'Yes, dear, very much. It was very nice and kind of him to bring you such lovely fruit and flowers.'

'And, Norah, don't *you* think him just the nicest person you ever met?' continued the trying Madge.

Norah suddenly remembered it was time for her sister to take her medicine, and murmuring something to this effect, rather hurriedly quitted the room to get it.

'Mother, why does Norah behave so funnily?' inquired the injured Madge. 'She might answer a straight question properly, I think.'

Mrs. Grant smiled, as she settled her daughter more comfortably.

'It was really very rude of her, darling, was it not, to run away without answering you? Never mind, you and I can chat together without her. Yes, I think Mr. Lindsay must be one of the very nicest persons, as you say. And now I am going to arrange these lovely flowers for you, and put them in water before they fade.'

'Norah is taking a wonderfully long time to get my medicine, I think,' grumbled the small invalid; 'she seemed half-asleep just now.'

'Never mind, she will be down this minute,' and Mrs. Grant refused to call her, as Madge desired.

She was a wise woman, and saw quite clearly how the ground

lay; that each evidently liked the other, and that there was some little obstacle to be overcome before the happy conclusion could be arrived at. She had gathered that her daughter loved Geoffrey from their fireside talk on the evening of her arrival, and she thought from one or two circumstances that the love was returned. Never was there a woman less of a match-maker; she would have scorned the title; yet she had a mother's natural desire to see her daughter made happy. But the thing must happen of itself; she felt that if a man had not courage enough to fight his way through obstacles he was not worthy of the name.

She thought that in time everything would come right between the two; they must settle the matter for themselves. Wise woman!

CHAPTER XIX.

'Love will find out the way.'

Anonymous.

GEOFFREY was in his studio. It was not a very bright picture he was engaged on. There was considerably more cloud than sunshine in it, and his brows were puckered and his face looked gloomy, as if to suit the subject. He was pondering over yesterday's call, wondering what steps he might take in the matter. Anything would be better than this present weary uncertainty, any conclusion must be easier to bear than these tormenting doubts. Had Percival proposed? and if so, had Norah accepted or refused him? Even if the latter surmise were the case, was there any hope for him, Geoffrey? Her manner yesterday had been quiet and composed, almost to coldness. What could she mean by acting so after

her seeming gladness at meeting only the day before? As Geoffrey pondered thus, occupied more with his thoughts than his picture, the amount of black paint that got into it would have made it a suitable sign for an undertaker's establishment.

At tea-time he always joined his mother, and many were the cosy chats they enjoyed over the social cup. But to-day he just strode into the room, took his cup from her hands, drank its contents silently, and remarked ere he again quitted the room,

'I am shocking bad company this afternoon, mother, as no doubt you have already discovered, and am best left to myself; so I will retire now, and try before dinner-time to dispose of my black dog up the chimney, as you used to do for me years ago. Your son is in a disgracefully bad temper, mother; but it is one of those cases where scolding will do no good.'

'Poor old Geoff! I don't fancy it can be very bad, when you are so ready to confess to it. But don't think of me, my dear; I have a number of accounts to look over, and shall be busy till dinner-time too.'

When mother and son met again the black dog had certainly been disposed of somewhere; there was no trace of him remaining, not even a bit of his curly tail. But in spite of the conversation Geoffrey valiantly kept up throughout dinner, he looked tired and worn; and his mother was quite prepared for it, when, having regained the drawing-room and seated themselves comfortably before the fire, he said,

'Don't let us have any lamps to-night, mother; this firelight is so pleasant, and I am sure you have knitted quite as much as is good for you, for one day at least.'

'These grand silk socks won't get on quickly at that rate, Geoff, and I am sure you require them.'

'Never mind, my feet must just be content with the old ones. I don't want you to knit now.'

'Very well, my son;' and the old lady submissively folded her hands and awaited the commands of her lord and master.

Sensible woman! she knew when to speak and when to keep silence; and now, though she guessed easily enough what it was Geoffrey had to say, she left him to open out his heart to her in his own way, knowing that she could no more assist in the operation than she could form one of her favourite rose-buds into a full-blown flower.

Presently Geoffrey began:

'I have told you about the call I made yesterday, have I not, mother?'

Now, it chanced that he had made two or three calls yesterday, and had also told his mother of the one *par excellence* several times over; but she abstained from saying so, and only answered,

'Yes, Geoff; you found Mrs. Grant at home, I believe?'

'Yes; and I saw the little girl who has been ill too.'

Neither was this news; but Mrs. Lindsay guessed what was coming, and inquired, with much interest,

'Yes, dear? And she was better, was she? Poor child, she must have had a trying time?'

'Yes, she is better; and, mother, I saw Norah.'

Ah, the murder was out now; they had reached the root of the matter at last; and settling herself more comfortably, Mrs. Lindsay prepared for a long story.

'Well, Geoff?'

'Well, mother, that is why I did not want the lamps lit to-night.'

'Because you found Miss Grant

at home, Geoff? I don't quite see how that can be.'

'Mother, don't be dense just on purpose. You understand what I mean perfectly. The truth is, I have had a fit of the blues all the afternoon, and have come to you for consolation.'

'Go on, dear boy; I will do my best. At all events, I can sympathise,' and the old lady, whose eyes twinkled mischievously a minute ago, now became perfectly grave, looking cool and intelligent enough to advise all the Queen's Ministers at once.

'You say you found Miss Grant at home?' she began, by way of introduction.

'Yes; and she did not seem one atom glad to see me.'

Mrs. Lindsay paused ere she answered quietly,

'But the other day, when you met her unexpectedly, she seemed pleased, you said.'

'Yes,' and Geoffrey's face relaxed at the recollection.

'Well, I should not trouble myself about her manner of yesterday, Geoff, and I will tell you why presently; but go on.'

'No; tell me why now, mother.'

'Be it so, then. What you said just now brought to my remembrance my own young days, long ago now, Geoff, when I was still Agnes Howard, and lived in the old Manor House. Would you like to hear a little of your mother's love-story? I have an idea it may help you.'

'Tell me about it, mother,' and Geoffrey looked up with respectful interest, for the old lady rarely spoke of the days long, long ago.

'Listen, then. As I said, I must tell you of the time when I lived with my parents and sisters at the old Manor House. Our life there was a very quiet one; few strangers came to our village, and whenever one did it used to

create quite a little excitement. Well, one day there came a gentleman to visit a family near; and, Geoff, his name was Mr. Lindsay—Frank Lindsay.'

The narrator paused; for recalling one remembrance brought up many more, and at sixty years the sad recollections preponderate.

'Yes, mother.'

'Ah, I was forgetting. Well, little by little we became acquainted, and he used often to find his way up to our house after dinner; for we had friendly evenings at home. At first I troubled myself little about him, beyond thinking he was a pleasant agreeable man who was kind enough to talk a good deal to me; for I had many clever sisters, your aunts, older than myself, and, having no particular talent as they had, was often placed in the background. Well, Geoff, by degrees I grew to like him more and more, and was innocently happier for doing so.

'One night we girls were chatting in my room before going to bed, and some silly friends who were with us at the time began to talk very foolishly; one, meaning to tease me, said something vulgar about "setting my cap" at this Frank Lindsay, and I don't know what besides.'

The old lady blushed like the girl she was telling about.

'Well, mother, and what did you answer?'

'I don't think I answered them at all, my boy. I remember only that I took them one by one by the shoulders, put them outside my door, and wished them all good-night. I don't think any of them said one word in remonstrance; for I had a good deal of dignity about me, for all I was so small.'

Mrs. Lindsay laughed softly at the remembrance.

'Then, Geoff, I just sat down in front of my fire, and asked myself what I had been doing to make them speak like that. There surely must be some foundation for it. What could I have done? Then I looked carefully into myself; and—O, dear me!—I soon discovered that to abandon my daily intercourse with your father would be like taking my life's blood from me. And then I knew that this was love. So I found that I was in love with this Mr. Lindsay, and how did I know that he cared two straws for me?

'Now that these things are so long past, I can smile as I remember the bitter sorrow of that night; but it was no smiling matter then, I can assure you. The feeling of shame, of utter loneliness—for I could tell my secret to no one—seemed like to break my heart. The next morning, while I was dressing, there came a tap at my door, and the girl who had spoken those foolish words came into my room and begged my pardon. She was by no means bad, poor thing, only silly; and I forgave her at once, feigning to laugh at her fancies. But the wound had been made, Geoff, and it took some time to heal.

'Our pleasant intercourse was completely at an end. I never could be with Mr. Lindsay but the words seemed to be running backwards and forwards in my brain—"setting my cap at him, setting my cap at him;" consequently I avoided him when I possibly could, and when chance threw us together tried to be merely politely cordial, and, as you may imagine, failed utterly. Your father often told me afterwards that I was as cold as hail-stones. Ah, but he was brave, my son, and you must be like him; for, spite of my seeming indifference, he, nothing daunted,

continued as before, only paying me more attention; till one day—ah, well, one day, Geoff—I promised at the foot of our old garden, where he found me that fine morning, that when the spring-time came I should leave the old Manor House and become his wife. I shall never forget the relief of that day, when, no longer ashamed of my love, I had the happy consciousness that it was returned, that the one man in all the world to me had chosen me as his wife; and, Geoffrey, had not your father possessed courage enough to fight his way through my seeming coldness, and put to me a single question, of one thing I am certain—I should have been Agnes Howard to this day.'

Geoffrey smiled. 'And you want me to do the same?'

'I want you to judge for yourself; but will you be angry if your mother ventures to advise you?'

'You know I shall not.'

'Then, Geoff, I think you must prepare to do something decisive in this matter—cut through the cold manner, which, after all, is probably only assumed to hide warm feelings, and get a final answer. Or else—and this is equally necessary—you must stay away from her, Geoff; you must, in fairness to the girl. I can see no other way but these two: surely the first need not be so very difficult, my son?'

'O mother, it is easy to give advice. Forgive me, I don't want to be impatient, but you don't know how hard it is to act rightly in this matter; it is not all plain sailing.'

Geoffrey leant his head on his hand and sighed; when he raised it again he looked harassed and perplexed. 'I can tell you this much, to show you how difficult the case is—I have been made a

confidant by the very man I dread. Don't you see how difficult it is for me to act rightly? If it were but the simple matter of proposing, I would do it to-morrow; but would such conduct be honourable under the circumstances?

'Then, Geoff, I think in that case you can do one thing more. Having confided in you so far, you have a right to know if he has succeeded. Write to him as man to man; as such he must respect your inquiry, as you will his answer; at least it will set your doubts at rest. And till you get it, Geoff, put some force upon your inclinations; keep away from Addison-gardens. I believe that in a day or two there will be no reason for your doing so, for in these times girls don't keep engagements secret, unless there be some strong necessity; and very likely all you noticed between the two in the Highlands, which seemed to corroborate your fears, could be explained away in two minutes. Don't act rashly in any way, my boy. You are not the only one who has had trials of the same nature, and passed happily out of them. Perhaps it proves, dear, that the love is true, just because at first it does not run quite smoothly. However, I have spoken quite as much as is good for one old woman. If I have given you my advice too freely, forgive me. Thank you for taking me so openly into your confidence; it is very precious to me, and I could not bear you to keep all these worries to yourself. Think over what I have told you, and God bless you, Geoffrey! Good-night!'

Geoffrey did act upon the advice so lovingly given. Not rashly, for though the letter was written before he lay down that night, he sat some hours after his

mother had retired to rest, pondering over the long conversation they had held together. In some respects it comforted him. Norah's coldness might be easily accounted for, after all. He need not torment himself by fearing she was fickle, merely trifling with his affections. There was great comfort in that thought. Then if Percival only wrote back what he hoped—ah, then! Well, he dare not think too much on what might follow. Geoffrey felt sure that, at Robin Lodge, Percival had guessed once or twice that he was not the only person to whom Norah's every word and look were precious; imparting his hopes with regard to her so quickly was proof of this. It was all of a piece with the man's selfishness. He probably never thought when he did so of the pain every word he spoke was inflicting, neither would it have entered his head to impart one word of hope to Geoffrey after his own had fallen to the ground. Ah, well, he was vanquished, poor fellow, and we must not be too hard on him. No doubt he felt that the path before his rival lay all clear and smooth, while for him it had ended in trouble and disappointment. He forgot that Norah had told him he and she should only know of that scene in the conservatory, that Geoffrey was bound in honour to respect his confidence, and that, until he knew Percival's hopes were ended, he dare not attempt to supplant him.

So Geoffrey wrote his letter that night; many were the sheets that, half begun, were thrown into the fire, before one was written that satisfied him in every way. It was a simple manly note, asking for an honest manly answer in return, and begging for that answer soon. It was worded as gently as could

be, for Geoffrey was sincerely anxious that if Percival had been disappointed the letter should wound him as little as possible. They say kindness is never wasted, and I suppose in the long-run it is not. But Geoffrey need not have sat up so late that night, and he need not so much have feared to wound.

It was four weeks now since the day of the dance at Robin Lodge, and Percival, feeling honestly sad and heavy-hearted as he quitted it next day, proceeded thence on a round of visits to other shootings. At first he wished he could cut them all, quit the country and travel about abroad, till he had, in a measure, forgotten his sorrow. *En route* for his next visit, finding himself the sole occupant of the railway-carriage, he pulled out his notebook, and composed some impassioned lines beginning,

'And canst thou, canst thou still refuse
This heart, this heart of mine?'

ending by suddenly requesting the passing stranger not to trouble him in his lonely tomb (which, by the way, I don't think any one would have felt much inclined to do), but to go on and enjoy life's pleasures while they lasted, and forget that under the green sod there rested a broken-hearted but forgiving lover.

He read his production over as the train puffed steadily on, found great comfort therein, folded it carefully, and deposited it near his heart. But soon he had reached his destination; and lo and behold! he found there a goodly number of fresh young faces, pretty girls who did *not* snub him, but were ready to laugh at his jokes, and trouble themselves to amuse him. He tried to keep up the character of a broken-hearted lover for some time; but as none of the party knew of his late ex-

periences, he found it would not answer, and that he had better pocket his feelings for the present; which he did, and found the plan a good one.

The first night, on reaching his room, he took out his poem, read it, sighed deeply three times, and carefully replaced it in its resting-place. The second night he again produced it, sighed twice, hesitated, then replaced it as before. The third night he took it out again, sighed once, and by no means deeply, but after a moment's hesitation returned it to his pocket. The fourth night—and how shall I tell of it?—the little poem was produced, read through, gazed at sentimentally for an instant, half replaced, then taken out again, and murmuring, 'Well, I know it by heart now; what good will it do to keep it?' Percival held the paper in the candle for a moment, then threw it into the fire, and calmly watched it burn away. The next day he was in better spirits than he had been for some time.

Percival may be left where he is for the present. I have told of four days of his visit at this shooting. Kind reader, it is for you to imagine the rest. Picture to yourself a merry holiday party, *all* gay, without one exception, and you have hit the truth. At the moment when Geoffrey was sitting alone, beginning one sheet after another, satisfied with none, harassed and perplexed, Percival was gaily leading 'up the middle and down again' with the prettiest girl in the house. Ah, well:

'Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more!
Men were deceivers ever;
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.'

CHAPTER XX.

'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick.'
SOLOMON.

'True love can no more be diminished
by showers of evil hap, than flowers are
marred by timely rains.'

SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

WHATEVER the ladies did, somebody sighed pretty often in the days following that on which the important letter was posted. Geoffrey waited at first patiently enough; he could not expect an answer for some little time; but, as one day succeeded another and still none came, he grew restless and uneasy, and his mother watching him, though endeavouring to conceal from him that she did so, felt his troubles all her own as she saw him begin one occupation after another, yet seem unable to settle properly to anything. He would take up a book, read it for ten minutes, lay it down impatiently and begin another, with no better result; paint for a little while, abandon that in the same way; call Lizzie for a walk, suddenly change his mind, and return once more to the room, only to commence a restless walk up and down, as wearing to his own and his mother's nerves as to their poor carpet.

It is a trying thing to live in the same house with a man in love. When you feel in a thoroughly angelic frame of mind, and make a remark corresponding with your temper, it is received snappishly, and you are obliged to retire discomfited. He *will not* be amused, and it is all very well that he begs to be 'left alone'—that *sounds* unselfish and uncomplaining; but it *means* lolling about the place, in your armchairs, on your sofas, sudden jumps at mention of certain names, general irritability, and an utter absence of interest in all but the one absorbing topic. A pleasant companion this, truly,

and such a one was Geoffrey at this time. His mother, kind soul, understood and sympathised with him. It was not altogether his fault, poor fellow; for how very slowly those days seemed to succeed one another! The clock had gone perfectly for many years previously; but now the hands seemed to go round slowly, more slowly each day, for

'With what heavy and retarding weight
Doth expectation load the wing of
time!'

Geoffrey felt sick at heart, as each of the many London posts left letters at the door, yet none with the desired post-mark for him. He had followed his mother's advice in another matter, even more hard. Since that fireside talk, Mrs. Lindsay had called on the Grants, and told her son so, but he had not accompanied her. On her return she said nothing till he put a question or two; then she said, smiling, 'I think, Geoff, the artist certainly did *not* idealise his frontispiece; I know I could love Norah as a dear daughter.'

While in this state of indecision the post did one day bestow on him a letter, but, alas, not from Scotland. It proved to be a long-talked-of invitation from an old college friend, now married and settled in the country, to come and have a pop or two at his pheasants. Geoffrey read the note through, and then rather listlessly handed it to his mother.

'You will go?' she inquired, as she perused it.

'How could I, mother, and enjoy it in this state of uncertainty? I don't believe I have the heart left even to shoot pheasants.'

Mrs. Lindsay pondered a minute ere she answered,

'I would go, Geoff. Being here,

so near Miss Grant, makes it all the harder for you. You are only asked for a few days, and, after all, will be within easy distance of London; if any letter came, you could know at once. Yes, I would certainly go,' she added more decidedly.

'Mother, you have trained up your son to be obedient, and he must not disappoint you in his old age, especially as I believe you are right. But if I consulted my own inclinations I should much prefer remaining at home, and giving the pheasants I am destined to kill a longer lease of life.'

So in the end Geoffrey went; and his mother, who, with Lassie, watched his departure from the window, nodded her head approvingly as she returned to the socks she was knitting for him.

Geoffrey did *not* indite a poem on his journey; but at the bottom of his portmanteau there lay a little portrait, which at the end of the fourth night of his visit he did *not* consign to the flames, spite of there being many a sweet damsel in the house.

And as Madge grew daily stronger, so Norah grew paler. It was many days now since Geoffrey's call, and he had never come again. True, his mother had been more than once, and proved most kind and pleasant; but, strange to say, she hardly mentioned her son's name, and Norah began to wonder if, after all, she could be such a loving mother as she had pictured her. That she was an affectionate old lady there could be little doubt, for at the end of her first call, as she was bidding Norah good-bye, she drew her close, saying, 'I do love to kiss young faces, they smell as sweet as posies,' and turning to Mrs. Grant, she added, 'You are happy in your daughters. I had one once,

and she would have been about this age now; she was my youngest, my one little girl;' and turning rather quickly away, Mrs. Lindsay trotted suddenly down to her carriage. Norah's heart had gone out to her from that day, but she wished that sometimes the mother would talk about her son; tell of him as a child, for instance, as most mothers are so fond of doing—of his early sayings and deeds; it would be nice to hear of them. The old lady was constant in her kindnesses; many were the flowers and fruits which found their way to delight Madge's heart; and one day the long-looked-for drive actually took place, when, carefully wrapped up, she was carried to the carriage and slowly driven once or twice round the Park. It was delightful to be out once more, to see the people and trees again, and she returned home radiant, enraptured with Mrs. Lindsay's kindness.

'And did you chatter much?' inquired Norah, who was seated at work in the drawing-room.

'O, yes; we talked about everything—about the flowers, and Lassie, and the seaside. We chatted about *you*, for one thing.'

'I am a person, my dear, not a thing; and I think you must have been rather badly off for conversation before you did that.'

'O no, not a bit of it! Only, you know, she began, and then there was such lots to say;' and Madge leaned her head lovingly on Norah's shoulder.

'Tired, dear?'

'No, only this is so nice! Norah, I told her how good you had been when I was ill, and how you had sat up with me every night, and when I was getting better waited on me always, and never grew tired of amusing me and telling me stories; and then I asked her—no, Norah, I *will*

tell'—as her sister's hand was placed across her mouth—'I asked if she thought there could be any one so good as you in all the world; and she said you were a girl in a thousand—those were her very words—and that you would make a good—and then she suddenly stopped and changed the subject, telling me about something Lassie had done, which was not half so nice.'

'I think, Madge, if Mrs. Lindsay takes you out again, I must run a tuck in your tongue before you go—not cut off a bit, you know, for it may be let down again when you are at home; but it is not good manners to praise one's relations too much to strangers: however much we may love them ourselves, it may not be so interesting to them.'

Madge looked discomfited for an instant; but then her face cleared.

'Well, at any rate, it *was* good manners to-day, for whenever I stopped Mrs. Lindsay asked me to go on; and she *was* very much interested, I could see by her face, so you are quite wrong; and with these two feathers so triumphantly stuck in her cap, Madge laughed and quitted the room, feeling she had worsted her sister in their argument.

'One in a thousand,' the words rang sweetly in Norah's ears, 'one in a thousand'! Did Mrs. Lindsay really mean that? and would she make a good—what? Well, suppose the word *had* been 'wife,' what of that? how utterly conceited, to imagine she had any particular husband in her mind when she spoke! Ah, well, as affairs stood at present, it seemed most likely that she would live and die Norah Grant; Geoffrey had evidently forgotten all about her. 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' hope quite abandoned

is sometimes a much easier thing to bear, thought poor Norah, as she sat where her sister had left her, occupied with her needle and her thoughts, though the latter got most of her attention, I fancy. Well, there might be many worse fates than living to comfort her mother's declining years, and to act 'aunt Norah' to Madge's children. Surely she must be a very undutiful daughter to wish for any other destiny. This little arrangement would be very nice, really very nice, when you come to think of it; she should be able to enjoy the idea of it very much—after a time, at least. She would try not to turn into a sour old maid, and she smiled as Miss Duff rose to her remembrance; if she had a dog, it should be one with a sweet disposition; and to one thing Norah had made up her mind—she would always try to promote the happiness of others in the very matter she had herself been disappointed in, in fact become a very match-maker. Wonderfully good resolutions, were they not? to come from a pretty maiden of two-and-twenty; but they still remained to be carried out—a more difficult matter. Besides, actions speak louder than words; and if the fate you have just been picturing to yourself, my dear Norah, be such a very desirable one, how was it that, fancying you heard a footstep on the stair, you so suddenly whisked out your handkerchief and wiped away something very like a tear? Well, it may have been a tear of joy, as you certainly then commenced humming a gay little tune; but any one listening would have noticed that the tremolo stop was decidedly on as you hummed. The footstep had, however, only been imagined; and Norah ceased to hum, and continued to work. As she did so,

after a time there stole over her countenance, in place of the assumed gaiety, a look more lasting and more peaceful. She would not try to pretend, even to herself, that the lot she had imagined was the one of all others she would herself have chosen; it was not, and where was the use of trying to believe it was? But what if it were the one best for her? that was a different matter, and must be examined in a different light.

'Intrust thy fortune to the powers above;
Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want;
In goodness, as in greatness, they excel;
Ah, that we loved ourselves but half so well!'

These words of Dryden's arose to her memory, and Norah resolved that, whatever it might cost, she would endeavour to act up to them, and to do so cheerfully. Poor little soul! it was a difficult task, but she was brave and good.

Presently Madge strolled into the room, and soon remarked indifferently,

'Mrs. Lindsay says her son's left.'

'Left?' and Norah's colour rose quickly, then utterly forsook her cheek; but her head being bent over her work, Madge did not perceive anything amiss, and continued,

'Yes; gone for a few days' shooting to the country. She says she misses him very much. It is funny, Norah, how much we talked of him out driving this afternoon, yet when she calls she never mentions him. I don't believe you are listening one bit! Don't you care for me to talk? Perhaps your head aches?' and Madge put one arm affectionately round Norah's neck and peeped into her face as she asked the

question. 'I don't believe you are well,' she continued, 'you look so pale.'

'I am quite well, dear, and you must not take foolish ideas into your little head;' and Norah looked up, and kissed the pretty face bending over her.

'Well, I can't make you out at all,' continued the unobservant Madge; 'I believe you've caught the fever.'

Her sister could not help laughing.

'You little silly thing! I don't feel any of the symptoms, and you had better get me out of your head, my dear, for there is nothing whatever the matter with me.' And the conversation dropped.

A few days later, the doctor proposed change of air for Madge, in order to render her cure complete, and Mrs. Grant felt that it was quite as much needed by her elder as by her younger child; she had been by no means blind to Norah's pale and altered looks lately, but had thought it wisest to make no remark on the subject at present. Madge had taken an invalid's dislike to the idea of the seaside, and as the autumn was so unusually fine, they determined to find some inland place where they might rusticate for a fortnight, before the winter set in, and grow fat on cream and fresh eggs. The question was, where should they go? and this was still undecided, when one fine day Mr. Richard Lewis and his sister called.

Such a funny little couple as they were! They always entered a room arm-in-arm, in old-fashioned loving style, and each seemed to hang upon the other's words, and to read in each other's eyes what they should next say and do. Wonderfully like each other they were, this brother and sister. The

hair of each was almost white; both had a delicate fresh complexion, almost like a girl's, and the same gentle expression rested on each face. To look at them, you would have thought Time had been very kind to them, and flown over their heads without allowing many of its troubles to fall on them. Yet it was not so. Once they had formed part of a large family, and now these were the sole remaining two; and afterwards, Norah learnt that some forty years ago there had been gay preparations in their home for a marriage, and Mr. Richard should have been the bridegroom. But he never was; for the day before that fixed for the wedding, he and his love were out riding together; somehow her horse took fright and threw her, and after she was conveyed home she lived a few hours only. This was the story Miss Mary Lewis related one day as she and Norah were alone together; told it gently and softly, but almost cheerfully; and as she ended, remarked, with her sweet childlike smile, 'You see, my dear, Dick and I are getting old; they will meet soon again, my brother and his love, and then there will be no more parting for any of us. I know the days alone, with only me for company, have sometimes seemed long to my poor Dick; but I suppose when they can look back together over these years of separation, they will seem very short to them then; they will know it was all for the best, all for the best, my dear.'

After she knew that story, Norah often wondered at his cheerful ways and merry laugh; he seldom seemed sad or gloomy, and there was such a peaceful expression on the kind old face. She wondered, too, what story the little sister could have told of

her own life, had she so chosen; no doubt there was one. At one time she too may have had hopes of a little home of her own, shared with the one she loved best on earth, which had had to be sorrowfully abandoned. However that might be, there never was a more cheerful little couple, ever trying to promote the happiness of others, ever working so quietly and unobtrusively. Many were the hearts they lightened, both by their kind deeds and cheery loving words; and the latter go far.

This afternoon Mr. Lewis produced a large basket for Madge, containing flowers, and jellies, and delicious home-made bread and cakes, in which her child's soul delighted.

He grunted three times, it was his usual way of opening a conversation. 'So you are getting better, are you, my dear? I told your sister you would, long ago, before ever I saw you; you see I always find it answers best to look on the bright side while we can. I felt sure you would get well; and now, here you are! the roses all coming back too, after their holiday, truants that they were.'

Madge laughed. 'O yes, they are all coming back like good children, are they not, mother?'

'Yes, I think they are, dear. Tell Mr. Lewis about our country plan, Madge; perhaps he may help us in our decision.'

'Country, ma'am? Go to Margate. Sensible quiet place at this time of the year. My sister and I can recommend you lodgings there, with an honest sober landlady, for a wonder, who will not eat her meals off your gas and coals. Can't we recommend her, Mary?'

'Yes, Dick,' answered the little lady softly.

Mrs. Grant explained that they were in search of some quiet inland place; Madge had been to the seaside quite recently.

'Tired of it already, are you, little lady? Well, I must think. Mary, you think too,' and the old gentleman folded his hands on the top of his long silver-headed cane, rested his chin upon them, and pondered, while his sister sat with wrinkled brows cogitating deeply. Presently she gave a little laugh: 'Buttercup Farm, Dick.'

'Good girl! Mr. Dick always spoke of his sister as a mere child. 'The very thing. Mrs. Grant, if what you want is an old-fashioned farmhouse, standing high, rambling, fresh, and clean, where you will be warmly welcomed and carefully attended, go to Buttercup Farm. Sounds like an advertisement, ma'am; but I can assure you, I speak from experience—don't I, Mary!—and, strange to say, this landlady don't like coal-pie nor gas-soup any more than the other one. Very queer, but they are two rare exceptions to the general rule—rare exceptions, ma'am!'

'Don't you think there are many who have not those tastes, Mr. Lewis?' inquired Mrs. Grant, much amused. 'I have known some honest landladies in my day, too.'

'Lucky woman, then! they are rare exceptions. The world is full of wickedness; but I have known a pretty fair sprinkling of honest folk, too; yes, I have been lucky, I must say.'

The strange thing about Mr. Richard Lewis was, that all his friends and acquaintance seemed to be good and honest people, and they comprised all grades in life; but he always made them out to be exceptions to the general rule—rare exceptions, as he said. He was constantly adding another member to the list, till it became

very large indeed. Perhaps it was some crossing-sweeper, a little boy or girl probably, whose pitiful tale he took the trouble to inquire into and relieve, whom he would help on and place in the way of earning an honest livelihood, and then pretend to be much surprised when the object of his charity showed gratitude, and would wonder he should make so much work over a trifle; but he was 'an exception.'

Or perhaps it was some clever plodding youth, stealing time from rest to acquire the knowledge his thirsty soul longed for; and Mr. Dick would find him out, lend him books, explain away difficulties, and later on advance money when it was needed. Great would be his wonder when the money was returned. 'Dear me! here was another honest person, another rare exception!' And so the list grew and grew.

As he went on talking this afternoon, descanting on the many beauties of Buttercup Farm, its cows, its hens, and orchard and garden, the delicious cream to be had there, and, above all, a pony Madge could ride, she felt she would rather go to this paradise of farmhouses than to any other place in the world.

'Mr. and Mrs. Brown were old servants of ours, years ago,' observed Miss Mary. 'They have some pretty rooms in this farmhouse that they always let in summer. Dick and I have been there many times ourselves, have we not, Dick?'

'Quite right, dear girl, quite right.'

'And I am sure you would be happy and very comfortable there,' she continued; 'the air in that part of Hertfordshire is thought very bracing, and the country is pretty.'

So it was settled that if Mr.

and Mrs. Brown would take them in at Buttercup Farm, there would they repair. And having thus done a good turn to friends in the country and friends in town, Mr. Lewis offered his sister his arm, and, with many good-byes, departed.

'I think, Norah,' remarked Mrs.

Grant, 'you choose your friends well; he is a dear old man.'

'Yes, I think she makes wonderfully nice friends,' observed Madge, 'especially lately. First Mr. Lindsay, and then this dear old gentleman. Which do you like best, Norah?'

The answer was unsatisfactory.

(To be continued.)

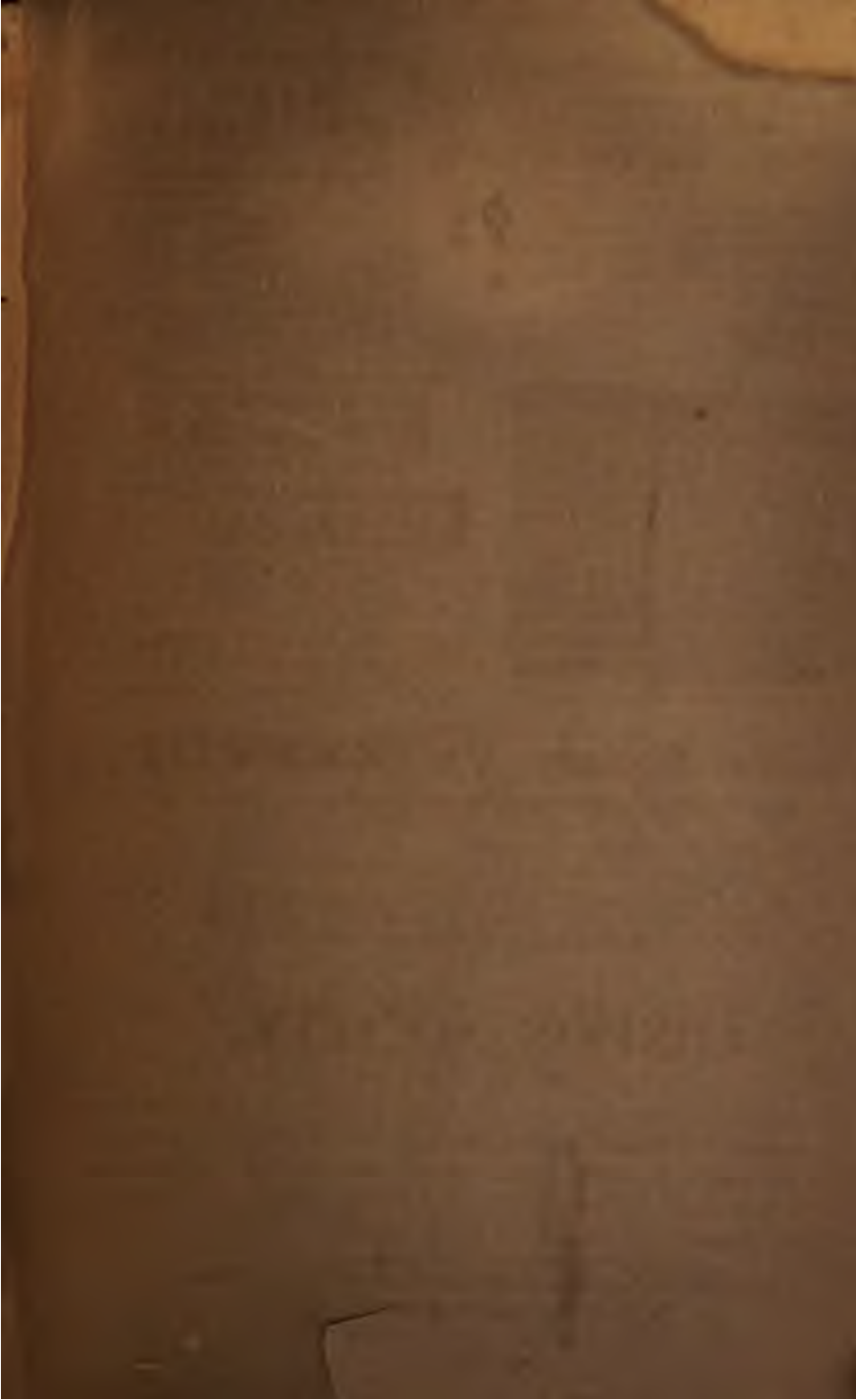
THE EARL'S DOOM.

A Legend of St. Nectan's Bell.

'O, GRIP me, hands of the sturdy grip,
That have bled for me and mine,
And deeply dip each loyal lip
In a mighty cup of wine.
My last stout cup!—ay, mine eye is bright,
And my heart beats full and free;
Yet I know that the dawn of to-morrow's light
Shall bring no light to me.'
Hark to the notes that sink and swell!
Hark to the toll of St. Nectan's bell!

'St. Nectan's bell in the western tower—
The ringerless, ropeless bell—
Self-swayed, it pealed in my natal hour;
Self-swayed, it hath tolled my knell.
This windless eve, 'twixt the light and dark,
Like a soul that parts in pain,
It moaned in mine ear, it groaned—O, hark,
Those iron sobs again!
Hark to the notes that sink and swell!
Hark to the toll of St. Nectan's bell!'

They gripped his hand with a sturdy grip,
They gazed with misty eyne,
And deep was the dip of each bearded lip
In the earl's great cup of wine.
He held it high, and he drained it dry,
Then forward drooped his head,
And, with never a word and never a sigh,
He fell on his face stone-dead.
Hark to the notes that sink and swell!
Hark to the toll of St. Nectan's bell!





LONDON SOCIETY.

APRIL 1881.

ROMANTIC STORIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION: A CIRCUMSTANTIAL PUZZLE.

I.

THE almost insuperable difficulty of telling a story with even a grain of truth in it is this—or, I should rather say, the two insuperable difficulties are these: firstly, there is never the faintest dramatic point about really true stories; secondly, if they are worth telling at all, they are almost always incredible. And the truer they are, the more pointless and the more incredible they are. The story I am going to tell is neither dramatic nor probable. And yet it seems to me worth telling—independently of its inherent curiosity—as an instance of those extraordinary freaks of psychology which now and again throw out of gear altogether the every-day experience of practical men, among whom I have some claim to be reckoned. It has also a yet more important bearing upon the manner of making delicate investigations which, if I remember to do so, I may perhaps take occasion to point out before I have done. As when I sent you my last contribution to your museum of professional curiosities, I will manage my own proper personality in that of my informant, the solicitor who played so leading

and, for a time, so uncomfortable a part in the affair. For all purposes it is more convenient to translate 'he' into 'I,' when one is telling another man's story. Indeed, it is almost essential to the process of telling the tale as it was told to me.

I, then, early one forenoon, received a visit from my very best client, Mr. John Buller.

Mr. John Buller was a gentleman who, still hardly past the prime of life, had made a considerable fortune as a builder and contractor. Altogether there must have been something out of the common about him, for he had become the wealthy man he certainly was seemingly in defiance of all established precedents and rules. He was not what is commonly—and often very mistakenly—called a 'good man of business;' he always had more irons in the fire than he could possibly attend to personally, or even superintend generally, and he placed such implicit trust in all who served him or dealt with him as to amount to credulity. Nevertheless, I am by no means sure myself of its being really singular that his many irons should have taken excellent care of them-

selves, and that he very rarely indeed, at least to my knowledge, found himself seriously deceived. I need hardly say that, like all men of such a temper, to be found out in deceiving him in the smallest trifle was to lose his confidence irrevocably and for ever ; so that not only were moderately honourable men put upon their honour to an unusual degree in their relations towards one who trusted them so completely, but the dishonourable were by experience taught to fear injuring one from whom everything was to be gained but pardon. He certainly was not one of those who hold that in business a man should have no enemies and no friends. All men were his friends until, as sometimes would happen, they became his enemies. And yet one might know him for years without suspecting that he had any sort of temper at all. Doubtless it was the consciousness on his own part of having one, and the suspicion that it might be a weakness or a failing, that made him seem needlessly hard and reserved. On the whole, I incline to ascribe his success in life less to courage and over-confidence than to a yet more unbusiness-like habit of always doing his work a little better than his contract required. I would pay ten per cent higher rent, any day, to live in a house that I knew to have been built by John Buller. I should know that everything about that house was better than it seemed. And that is the chief reason why I set out by speaking of him as a gentleman. For he had risen from the lower rounds of the ladder, and, so far as he might be called a diamond, was a decidedly unpolished one. He was, I believe, a seriously religious man ; he was an unquestionably generous and charitable one ; not highly educated, but

with plenty of intelligence and openness of mind. I should add that he had never been married, was without known relations, and lived alone in thoroughly respectable comfort, without pretence of any kind. The nature of his business, by no means confined to the limits of the northern town where we both lived, took him about a great deal, and no doubt largely helped him to do without much society at home. For that matter, he was, socially speaking, above one-half the place and below the other ; so, though universally respected, he must, on the whole, have lived almost too much alone. But in this matter, as in all things, habit is everything ; and so busy a man had little time to feel dull.

‘Mr. Standish,’ he began, in the broad north-country speech, which I shall make no pretence of reproducing, ‘something mortal queer has happened, that I can’t make head or tail o’. It’s not the money’s-worth, though fifty pound is fifty pound ; but—Look here !’

‘Your cheque for fifty pounds, cashed by the Redport branch of the County Bank, and returned to you in the regular course. Well, what’s wrong ?’

‘Do you see anything queer about that cheque, Mr. Standish—anything out of the way ?’

‘No. It’s drawn to yourself or order by yourself ; indorsed by you ; and nothing wrong about date or anything else that I can see.’

‘And if you’d been a clerk at Redport, you’d have cashed that over the counter without any bones ?’

‘Of course I should ; as I suppose from this you have an account there.’

‘And that’s just what was done, then. And all the same, that cheque was no more filled

up, nor signed, nor backed by me than it was by you.'

'You mean to say it's forged? By Jove, that's a serious thing! Do you mean to say that some rascal has been clever enough to fill up and sign a whole cheque in your handwriting, even down to the least turn of the smallest stroke of the pen? I'd have sworn to this being your own handwriting before a jury.'

'Ay, Mr. Standish; and so would I, if I didn't know. But I do know; and that's no more my cheque than it's yours. And I'm hanged if I know what to do.'

'You've seen the bank manager here? What does he say?'

'No, I haven't. I haven't seen a soul; and what's more, I don't mean to, unless I'm driven. And it's to get out of being driven I'm come to you. This cheque isn't the first of 'em, Mr. Standish—no, nor the second, nor yet the third. There's four cheques of fifty pounds apiece; and I've not drawn one!'

'And you haven't found it out till now?'

'I've found out nothing, Mr. Standish, mark that—not one word. Nothing's found out till it's proved. I want to know what I can do.'

That premature question was the only sign of precipitancy or impatience I had ever seen in John Buller. I began to see that he was disturbed by something beyond the loss, to himself or the bank, of two hundred pounds, or by the always detestable necessity of being mixed up in what looked like a criminal matter. So I made no answer, which is always the best way of getting quickly at the bottom of a story.

'I'm putting up the new row of villas on the esplanade at Redport,' said he. 'It's a biggish

job in a small way, and it's very much on my own account; and what with the hands, and one thing and another, there's a goodish lot of cash floating about from week to week—going out, anyhow, though of course none to speak of coming in. So, to save a lot of bother, I've had for some time an account with the branch at Redport. You don't know the place, I believe?'

'I've never been over there yet; but I must run over some day, when I can get a holiday. Well?'

'It's been main through me that the place has got on well enough to make it worth the bank's while to have a branch there; and if I was to draw for five times what's to my credit, I don't suppose they'd make any bother, looking to my credit at the main branch here. So this game might go on any time before I heard I'd overdrawn. As far as I'm concerned, a cheque on the branch at Redport's much the same as one on the bank here.'

'Well?'

'You see, though that job's middling big, I've got too many bigger on hand to bother in person with Redport. It's two months since I've been near the place, and may be it'll be another month before I can get over there again. So I've got a clerk of the works in an office in one of the villas, and he comes over to me here every Friday to report and take any new orders, and I give him cheques on the Redport branch for what's wanted—he brings me his accounts and vouchers, of course, and I settle that way whatever has to be paid running. And some of the cheques I receive I send over by him to be paid in there.'

'Excuse me,' said I, 'but doesn't this seem rather a loose

and rough way of doing things! In the first place, I don't see why you should make any payments through the Redport branch at all; and certainly I don't see how all this concerns these forgeries.'

'I'll tell you why I do it, and how it concerns these—Forgeries, too. I want to keep as much cash knocking about in Redport as I can, and to keep as little from going out; that's the way to push a new place on. And, for the same reason, I don't want those branch clerks to find they've got too little to do. My clerk comes to me at four o'clock every Friday afternoon. First of all, I give him a cheque for the men's week's wages. Then we go through the accounts, and for any that I want to settle off-hand I either draw separate cheques in favour of the different parties, or else I give him another lump cheque for him to cash and pay out in gold. In fact, there's all sorts of things to be paid in all sorts of ways. If the account seems running low, it's easier for me to pay in a few cheques than to bother the bank here. Anyhow, it saves me a bushel of bother, and don't oblige me to give more than an hour a week to Redport—and even an hour's too much at times.'

'Just tell me precisely everything that happens, please. We're rather vague, where we are. He comes to you at four every Friday, and you give him all these cheques—whatever he asks for—and then he goes back at once to Redport by rail?'

John Buller glanced at me sharply. By those words 'whatever he asks for' I had trodden upon what is always the most sensitive of an over-trustful man's corns: I had hinted at the want of worldly prudence which such a man, far more than any

other, hates to be suspected of lacking.

'I'm not quite a born fool,' said he. 'We go through the accounts, and he stays for supper and a bed. By breakfast-time next morning I've found a half hour to examine the accounts and to write the cheques. I give him the whole lot in a leather case, and he goes back to Redport; and it's his duty, before he goes to the office, to go to the Redport Bank and pay in and draw out whatever's required.'

I did not see how this made matters any better from a prudential point of view; but I did not venture again upon what I felt to be rather dangerous ground.

'Then all your transactions with the branch bank at Redport,' I asked, 'are confined to 10 o'clock on Saturday morning? This cheque is stamped as cashed on the 15th, which *would* be a Saturday. Of course we shall learn from your pass-book, or from the cheques themselves, if that was so with the others. If so, the false cheques must either have been presented together with the others, or by somebody who knew your system. Also, it is clear they were drawn, judging from this, by somebody who had exceptional means of knowing your handwriting, and of practising it at leisure—and, if I may say so, how little likely you were, with such a system of business as yours, to detect fraud very soon. Also, by somebody to whom your cheque-book was accessible, in one way or another. Are these cheques taken from your cheque-book, or can the thief have got hold of some other?'

I could see that John Buller began to look strangely troubled.

'From mine!' said he, in a curiously defiant tone.

'And the counterfoils? Cut

out, I suppose? That's the usual way.'

'No; every man Jack filled up in a way that would take the very devil in. And yet, Mr. Standish, those cheques are no more my drawing than they're yours. I keep a private account of every cheque I draw; and it stands to reason that when four cheques that you know you didn't draw are alone missing out of an account of fifty that you know you *did* draw, then you can't be mistaken. That's as clear as day.'

'All right, Mr. Buller; it is as clear as day. And though criminal business is very much out of my line, we'll have that forger beyond the seas in, comparatively speaking, the twinkling of an eye. What's the fellow's name?'

'His name? And how the deuce, sir, should I know his name?'

'Not know the name of your own clerk of the works at Redport? By Jove, Mr. Buller, I *shall* begin to think you a queer sort of a business man!'

'We're at crooked answers, Mr. Standish, it seems to me,' he said, wiping his forehead hard, though the weather was unusually cold. 'My clerk at Redport is Adam Brown.'

'Then it's lucky Mr. Adam Brown didn't live when forgers were hanged,' said I. 'You won't be able to recover from the bank, I'm afraid; such forgeries as those defy even extraordinary care to detect them. A bank-clerk is expected to be a great deal; but nobody expects him to be a conjurer. But—'

To my amazement, John Buller sprang up in a towering rage.

'And you—you dare to hint that—that—that poor lad, who's as honest as the day, would steal one farthing from me—a young man I'd trust with untold gold—

the orphan of the best woman that ever touched God's earth! I won't hear it, sir! I didn't come to *you* to hear slander against *her* son, that I've looked after for *her* sake, and who'd no more touch a farthing rushlight that belonged to me than you would yourself, sir! If there's one man who's as guiltless as the babe unborn, it's Adam Brown!'

'I honour your confidence in your *employés*, sir,' said I. 'Trust makes Trustworthy nine times out of ten. But look here. Here is a man whom you trust implicitly on your own showing. There is your cheque-book for one night every week under the same roof with him, the place where you keep it probably known to him. That man knows your writing, and how you fill up your cheques and your counterfoils. That man transacts *all* your business with the bank at Redport. That man, it seems, may account to you or not account to you just in what form he will. Nobody else in your employ seems open to suspicion; no stranger could act in such a way without instant detection. Think what any jury would say to such a state of things. We've as yet got no direct proof; but, with such circumstantial evidence to start with, direct proof is absolutely sure to come. Why, he might hope to carry on such a game as that safely for many years; at any rate, till he had restored what he had taken, as all those young rascals always "mean" to do some day when some impossible horse wins some impossible Derby. And, I'm afraid, previous good character in such cases always goes against a man. It doubles the guilt of his downfall, and is, indeed, the very means and cause of his being able to fall. Adam Brown is the man.'

John Buller's anger passed suddenly, as if ashamed of itself; and there was no mistaking the profound grief and distress of the tone in which he answered me.

'You'll excuse me,' said he. 'It was because I saw all this just as well as you do that I came here, hoping you, as a practical and unprejudiced man, would help me to see t'other side of things. And I was disappointed you didn't, and that was what made me fly. Don't you go to mistake me for being any softer than my neighbours. If you can prove to me the man who's been tampering with my cheque-book is Adam Brown, I'll treat him like a viper, Mr. Standish—that I will! I'd sooner cut my own throat than throw a crust to my own son, if I had one, if I couldn't trust him as my own right hand. And, if you'll believe it, sir, Adam Brown has been more to me than if he was my own son. For he's the orphan boy of the only woman I ever wanted to marry, or ever shall. I don't suspect him for one moment—not I. But for that very reason I want you to show me how to put him above the suspicion of any outside man, such as you. Take my word for it, it's not Adam Brown. If it was, I'd have done his business for him pretty quick, without bothering myself to come to you. But make as if I thought it was: you prove the innocence of an innocent lad, and, by Jingo, you'll take off my mind the biggest load of bricks that ever was on.'

The speech was inconsistent enough. But one thing was plain from it—John Buller was determined to disbelieve the clear evidence of his own reason. He had not come to me to find out a thief, but to get me to prove to his own satisfaction that the thief was an innocent man; and, at the same

time, to acquit him in his own eyes of intentional self-deception. He knew how he would have to act if he found his trust deceived, and the severity which he thought his duty in such cases frightened him, lest he should feel compelled to exercise it towards Adam Brown. I could not help smiling at the openness of the workings of his mind, or being touched by them, too. I had never suspected my substantial client of having been the victim of a romance since I had first gone down from London to Carcester.

'Then,' I asked again, a little hypocritically, 'you are convinced in your own mind, from your previous knowledge of his character, that Adam Brown is *not* the man?'

'I'm just as certain he's not as that I stand here. And, more for his sake than my own, I mean to know who *is* the man.'

'Have you spoken about it to Adam Brown?'

'Not I. I'd as soon speak to you, Mr. Standish, on the supposition that it might have been *you*.'

'Very good. If Adam Brown—'

'If, sir?'

'Since Adam Brown is innocent, we can very soon put him beyond the reach of any sort of suspicion, and without bringing the people at the bank into the affair—at least, not in any way that would make them think anything was seriously wrong in any particular direction. In the first place, arrange with them, both here and at Redport, not to cash any cheque of yours not bearing a certain private mark (which you will keep secret from all your *employés*) without forthwith advertising you of the person by whom it was presented. This will have the effect of narrowing matters

very considerably. What had better be done farther I think we will wait and see.'

'You quite understand, Mr. Standish, that whatever you do will find out who was the real man—not young Adam Brown? I—I doubt if I quite like to do that about the private mark after all. It seems a bit mean-like to my mind.'

'It's the best way of clearing Adam Brown if—since he's innocent, it seems to me,' said I.

'You think that? Well, you're right, I suppose. And, by Jingo, as he is innocent, why should I be afraid? If he wasn't—if I wasn't as sure of it as I'm alive—but it can't be! I'd sooner doubt my own right hand! I will. I'll settle about the private mark this very day.'

Of course I had not the faintest doubt in my own mind about the identity of this ingenious and systematic forger with Mr. Adam Brown. I had already given my reasons to John Buller; and they are so perfectly obvious, under all the circumstances, that I need not repeat them here. I could quite understand why John Buller, since he had a more than common interest in his clerk of the works at Redport, should be very anxious to be convinced that his belief in the latter's innocence was not inconsistent with the common sense proper to a shrewd man of the world, whose pride in never being 'done' is always the greater in proportion as it is unjustified. Men who are really sharp and shrewd know too well that they are always and inevitably being 'done' to bother their heads about their share in a universal doom.

I knew Adam Brown pretty well by sight, and a little by reputation. He was a good-looking pleasant young fellow, certainly

too young for his over-responsible place in John Buller's service, but well up to his work, and very popular with the young men of his own class in Carcester. His father had been an unsuccessful commission agent, and, as I had to-day learned for the first time, the successful rival in love of John Buller. I must leave it to others wholly to understand why the beaten suitor, whom nobody suspected of having a grain of sentiment in his composition, should have made himself a second father to this young man—in a reserved and wholly undemonstrative way, that is; for I feel certain now that Adam Brown looked upon himself simply as an ordinary *employé*, and did not fancy that the place he held in John Buller's business was due to the place in John Buller's heart of his dead mother. I daresay that little romance might prove worth writing for its own sake in the hands of a sentimental author. But this story is *not* a sentimental one.

So I was really rather sorry that circumstances pointed so clearly to Adam Brown as the guilty man, though of course I felt also that John Buller's eyes ought to be opened, and that such ungrateful crime ought to be punished as openly and as richly as it deserved. I had not the least intention of helping my client to persuade himself of the innocence of a guilty man. On the contrary, I fully meant to expose the young rascal before he could do worse harm; and for that purpose the plan of privately-marked cheques seemed the best that, upon the spur of the moment, I could hit on. It would satisfy John Buller by avoiding immediate scandal, and no doubt convict the forger just as well as any more open way.

But the explosion was to come

more sharply and swiftly than I had planned.

On the following Saturday morning the spirit moved me to take John Buller's house on my way to my own office, for I was not particularly busy at the moment. I thought it advisable to see with my own eyes something of that curious weekly despatch of cheques and bills to Redport, and I wanted also to make more particular acquaintance with the physiognomy of Mr. Adam Brown. I believed in physiognomy in those days. I need hardly say that I no longer now do anything of the kind, beyond knowing when a man eats too much and drinks too often. I have seen such saintly faces in the dock, and men on whom Nature has stamped blackguard, or even murderer, have been among the best whom she has made. Adam Brown, who had finished his breakfast and was just on the eve of starting for Redport, fell into neither of these extreme classes, and might easily have belonged to either side of the broad band between them where good is inextricably and undecipherably mixed up and often confused with harm. As I have said, he was young and good-looking; and he had a good face too, like a lad's who comes of good people and has been brought up well. And, what was better, it was not a weak one, nor a stupid one. But, at the same time, it wasn't a happy one, and gloomy rather than merely grave. His eyes, instead of looking bright or open, as a young man's should always be in the morning, were dull and red, as if he had either slept but little or were in the habit of taking something stronger than tea or coffee for breakfast when at home in his Redport lodgings. In such cases, the eye and the hand are one; and his

hand was not quite so steady as he held out his hand for the leather cheque-case, so I thought at least, as it ought to have been.

'I've only dropped in to see if you've made your arrangements about marking to-day's cheques,' said I, as soon as Adam Brown had closed the street-door. 'You've found nothing new, I suppose?'

'No. I wish to Heaven the thing was out and over; it worries me more than I try to say. There's nothing so horrible as having somebody about that you can't trust, and you don't know who. And you're a married man, Standish; you don't know what it means to swallow all your own worries yourself, with nobody to give the least bit of 'em to. But—holloa! Hi, Adam!' he called out, throwing up the window and calling down the street. 'Just to show you how things bother me,' he said to me, 'I've left out of the case just the very cheque from Archer & Company that I wanted to have paid in at Redport this very day. Hi, Adam! Ah, here you are! I was afraid you were out of earshot; but you're in lots of time for the train. There's something I wanted to say to you, and Mr. Standish coming in just now—'

There was nothing in the sudden recall, however unusual, to frighten an honest man. But I could not mistake my eyes—there are some cases in which we can't help reading faces, ay, and in believing what we read. If ever fright turned a man's face red and pale, it turned Adam Brown's now.

'Here's a cheque of Archer's,' said John Buller, noticing nothing, 'that I want paid in at Redport this morning, and I forgot it when Mr. Standish came in. Put it in the case with the others. Here it is. Three hundred and eighty-eight pounds nine.'

Adam Brown held out his hand for the cheque; but a sudden inspiration, prompted by the young man's unmistakable confusion, made me say,

'Yes; there's plenty of time for the train, but not for me. There's something I must say to you, Mr. Buller, before I go on to the office, and I've only allowed myself a minute to spare. Would you mind leaving us alone for one minute, Mr. Brown? You can leave the case here; Mr. Buller can put in the cheque while he's listening to me to save time.'

I watched the young man while I spoke, and what I saw made me feel more sure than ever. I held out my hand for the case, to pass it to John Buller, and felt Adam's fingers tremble as they touched mine. And yet not a word had been said that could alarm a perfectly innocent man, who has no secrets from his employer or even from his employer's attorney.

'Wait a bit,' I said to John Buller, as soon as Adam had left the room. 'Before putting in that cheque, just see if the others are as they ought to be.'

'The others? Of course they are. What do you mean?'

'Why, as you made one mistake, you might by chance have made another, you know. Well, while you're overhauling, I only just wanted to say—'

There was nothing I wanted to say, but I had no need to think of a pretext. I had my eye on John Buller, and before 'say' was off my lips—

'Good God!' cried he. 'Look here! Brown!' he shouted, 'Adam Brown—'

'Don't frighten him,' said I, rising and opening the door, knowing what John Buller had found in the case as well as if I had seen it with my very eyes.

'Mr. Brown, you may come in now.'

He came in, as a detected criminal comes before a judge, trembling and pale. I wondered he had been able to remain in the hall all alone for that terrible moment, during which, as he must have known, he was being tried, found guilty, and condemned.

To my surprise, John Buller, whom I had thought in the first stage of a passion, sat still, in front of his detected clerk, without a word. But I should not like to have been in Adam Brown's shoes during that silent pause. There was no sign or thought of anger in the long look of mingled sorrow and scorn—more of sorrow than of scorn—with which John Buller regarded the young man to whom he had tried to be a second father. I had done my duty, I suppose; but I could not help pitying both, and I know whom I pitied the most of the two. It was not the younger man.

I looked steadfastly at the fifth forged cheque for fifty pounds which John Buller had found, just as I had expected, in the leather case, and the preparation of which was quite enough to account for the sleepless look of the young man's eyes. It seemed to me that the imitation was even better than before.

'Adam Brown,' said John Buller at last, in a voice full of sadness, and yet of the double pathos which comes alone from more dignified firmness than I should have expected from such a man,— 'Adam Brown, I know well enough that you see your deceit discovered, and I won't add to your wrongdoing by tempting you to tell a lie. I knew your mother—long ago—and for her sake I first gave you work, and bread to work for.

But it was for your own sake I trusted you, even as she might have trusted me; and the end is that I shall never be able to trust man, woman, or child again. That is the injury *you* have done to *me*; and there's none greater that man can do to man. I fought hard against the belief of my own eyes—for weeks I've fought against it; but I know now. Don't be afraid. I'm not going to have you—your mother's son—put in the dock as a felon. But there's nothing I can do *for* a man—a boy—that—that—Go; and never cross my path again.'

The culprit tried to lift his eyes, but failed.

'Sir,' he began, 'I do not defend—I do not excuse—I never intended—'

'I am sorry for myself. Do not make me despise you. A man does as he intends. I'm wrong not to prosecute you; it's what I should do to any other man who did as—as you have done. Go. I give you the chance to redeem yourself, if you can; but not with me. Go.'

Without one attempt to defend or excuse his guilt, far less to deny it, the young man was gone.

'I do *not* thank you for this, Mr. Standish,' said John Buller. The tears came into his voice as he turned away.

II.

THE more I thought things over, the less displeased I was with myself for the way in which they had gone. The more anybody thinks about it, the more finished a rogue, in spite of his years, will Adam Brown appear to be. His plan was as clear as daylight now. Obviously, he had easily found where his employer kept his cheque-book for the bank

at Redport, and spent the better part of Friday night in filling up one of its forms, and manipulating the counterfoil, so as to produce an exact facsimile of a cheque drawn and signed by John Buller. On my life, I believe he might, so perfect was his process, have got a jury to acquit him on the ground that some strange accident must have been his enemy, and that the cheque was really John Buller's after all; for the best men of business may be guilty of mistake or error now and then. Yes, but then you see that defence would not have done after all, seeing that here was the sixth cheque forged in six weeks; and that John Buller not only had never had occasion to draw these, and knew he never had drawn them, but had kept a perfectly complete and accurate account, inaccurate in no slightest particular, of all he had had occasion to draw and remembered drawing. Mistake—if the reader will think for one instant—was thus rendered absolutely impossible. And not only was the matter clenched now by conduct on Adam Brown's part amounting to confession, without so much as an appeal for mercy, but *every cheque in the case bore the private mark except this alone*. And the packet had been in no hands but those of Adam Brown.

Of course it was natural that John Buller, like all men of his temper when they meet with such every-day things as ingratitude and breach of trust, should feel misanthropical, and as if confidence in his fellow-creatures was henceforth dead in him. But very few men indeed are Timons. We mostly return to our original nature: instinctive trust is happily a fine hardy growth that requires a great deal of killing. In a little while, no doubt, John

Buller would trust the next stranger rather more implicitly than if he had been his own brother, and be all the better for being rid of such an exceptionally clever rogue, a man with a positive genius for forgery, as his ex-clerk of the works at Redport. Perhaps, even, his experience would have a wholesome effect upon him by teaching him that the son of a woman we have loved in our youth is not, solely for that rather sentimental reason, bound to be better than all other sons of Eve in general. Young men who have had mothers have also had fathers; and Mr. Brown, the commission agent, had not borne altogether the highest of characters while alive.

I did not see, or hear from, John Buller for the next few days; which was rather singular, as he nearly always had a good deal of business on hand which required the help of a solicitor, and as two or three important agreements to which he was party were just then passing through my hands. But I heard in various incidental ways of young Brown. A clerk of mine was an acquaintance of his; and he told me—without knowing any of the circumstances—that Brown had suddenly left John Buller and had gone up to London to find another situation; which, without any sort of character (for John Buller was incapable of giving a false or even a misleading one to anybody), I imagined he would find it hard to do, except as active partner in a firm of forgers. From another source I heard he had had a fortune left him, and was going to live on a fine estate in the country. Anyhow, he left both Redport and Carcester without leaving behind him a guess as to the true reason of his departure.

It was not, indeed, till the following Friday afternoon that I next received a visit from John Buller. I thought him looking fagged and harassed, and I told him so.

'I'm afraid you keep too many irons in the fire,' said I.

'Not a bit of it. One keeps the other warm. If you was as much by yourself as I am, you'd want a bit more work than you could manage, just to keep you and yourself from quarrelling.'

'Have you heard anything more of young Brown?'

'Young Who?'

'Young Brown.'

'I've forgotten his name. And you won't remind me of it, if you and me's to keep friends. There's no such name. Talking of not looking well—it's you that don't look yourself, it seems to me. You want a day's holiday, and I've looked in to ask you to be so kind as to take one.'

'You're very kind, I'm sure; but—'

'“But” be hanged! Look here, Mr. Standish. To-day's Friday; and there's the usual business of paying in and drawing out to be done over at Redport to-morrow. I can't do it myself, as I've got to be in three other places at once by the first train; and I'm not such an ass as to trust any of my people here with the value of sevenpence-halfpenny. Once bit, twice shy. I've done with trusting for the rest of *my* days. At the rate of fifty pound a week, it don't pay. You've never been over at Redport; and, though I say it that shouldn't, the place is worth seeing, as a specimen of what places can be made to grow. You take a day's run over there to-morrow—you and Mrs. Standish too. I'll give you a pass on the line, and telegraph to the Star to treat you

like princes and princesses. All you'll have to do will be to hand my cheque-case over the bank-counter, which won't take you two minutes, or fifty yards out of your way to the new pier; and then you can make a Saturday-to-Monday of it, if you please. I want you to see Redport before it grows out of all knowing. Say yes, and I'll have the cheques and things ready for you to pick up at my house on your way to the train.'

I was not particularly anxious for a holiday; and certainly no wish to spend one *en prince* at the Star. But, at the same time, I had no sort of objection to an idle day, and it was almost necessary, as a matter of business, to see the neighbouring town which was becoming every day more and more an office word. So, though more to please my best client than for any other reason, I agreed, only bargaining that I should be left free from the special attentions of the Star. John Buller thanked me for my promise to go as if I had done him some extraordinary favour.

'Well, if you won't let me telegraph, when you do ask for lunch at the Star, mention my name. You won't see much going on in the building line just now; one of the things I've got to be away for to-morrow is to get another scoundrel—till *he's* found out, like the rest of 'em—in the place of poor young—of that young blackguard whose name I'll never remember again, if I live for a thousand years.'

Now I don't want to have it supposed for a moment that my going over to Redport alone—that is to say, without my wife—was due to any fault or neglect of mine. If I could have foreseen that my day of idleness was to be one of solitude also, I should pro-

bably not quite so readily have consented to take a holiday. As it happened, however, I found, when I got home from the office, that Mrs. Standish had almost that very moment received an urgent summons to the sick-bed of her sister, who lived at the other end of England, which obliged her to take the very next train from Carcester and to travel all night through. Naturally, until I had seen her off, I did not think again of my promised visit to Redport. So, as it was too late to back out of going, I decided to run over in the morning, do my business at the bank, and get back as early in the afternoon as the then infrequent trains between Redport and Carcester allowed.

So next morning, having told my clerks to close the office at the usual hour, which on Saturday was always an early one, I went to John Buller's house, and from his hands received the cheque-case which he had ready for me. Knowing his feelings about the matter, I refrained from making any sort of allusion to it, and even made a point, while receiving the case, of speaking carelessly about indifferent things. I put the case, otherwise untouched, in my breast-pocket, and there it remained till I reached the counter of the bank at Redport.

'Where's Mr. Brown?' asked the clerk, as he took the leather case. 'It doesn't seem like Saturday morning without seeing Brown.'

'He's away just at present,' said I. 'Mr. Buller asked me to give you this. All right, I suppose?'

There was no need to lessen my dignity in Redport as Mr. Buller's legal adviser, or to give Adam Brown the reputation he

deserved, by explaining why I was doing the work of a builder's clerk and messenger on this occasion.

'All right,' said the clerk, turning over the cheques, and duly noticing whether they were properly indorsed, and so on. 'Quite right. By the way, there's a message or something the manager wants to send to Mr. Buller, I believe. I was to tell Brown so when he called. I suppose you'll do just the same.'

'I can take any message for Mr. Buller,' said I. 'Anyhow, I shall be seeing him on Monday, if that will do.'

'I daresay it will. Would you mind stepping this way?'

I followed the clerk into an inner room, where I for the first time met the manager of the Redport branch of the County Bank, hitherto known to me as Mr. George Richards by name only. We bowed, and he offered me a seat politely.

'You are my friend Mr. Buller's new clerk of the works, I presume?' asked he.

'No,' said I. 'I have no business in Redport, except to cash and pay in these papers for Mr. Buller, while passing by. But if there is any message I can give him—'

'I don't know. You are not leaving Redport immediately, I suppose?'

'Well, as to that, I am. In fact, by the very next train.'

'By the next train? Hm!' Mr. Richards was a very young man for his place, and I began to fancy there was something I did not like in his manner. 'Going back to Carcester anyhow, I suppose?' he asked again.

'Yes,' I answered shortly. 'And I believe the train starts in half an hour. So if you can tell me what you want said to Mr. Buller

I shall be glad, as I haven't much time to lose.'

'Yes — of course — certainly. But there is a little matter: would you mind telling me if you received these cheques straight from Mr. Buller?'

'Certainly I did. Is there anything wrong?'

'You received them just as they are now?'

'Exactly as they are now. What is it, Mr. Richards? I am really in a hurry—'

'I'm very sorry. But, you see, I am in a responsible position, and one can't be too careful in these days. I have already sent a messenger to telegraph to Mr. Buller; would you mind waiting here till he comes?'

'The messenger?'

'No, till Mr. Buller can come over. I daresay it is all right, but—'

'But I can't wait, Mr. Richards. May I ask you what you mean? I can tell you that Mr. Buller is not in Carcester, and will not get your telegram till Monday, if then.'

'That's awkward, by Jove, if it is so. But that we shall see.'

'But meanwhile I must wish you good-day. If there's anything wrong you must settle it with Mr. Buller. I can't wait now.'

'No? Well, then, Mr.—Mr.—I must frankly tell you that I must ask you to wait, even if it's till Monday, till Mr. Buller can come over here. It's an awkward situation I'm placed in, but—and I daresay Mr. Buller is *not* at Carcester, as you say; but—well: whether you're—it's, all right or all wrong, you see, in your own interest that I must ask you to remain. You see here's a cheque here that I daren't cash without special instructions from Mr. Buller.'

'Don't cash it, then. Good-day—'

'Quite so. But I'd advise you

not to be in quite such a hurry to be off, all the same. In fact, it's my unpleasant duty to ask you to stay here at the bank until the fact of *this* cheque being in your hands can be more fully explained.'

'I have explained it,' I began rather angrily. 'I received it from Mr. Buller, if it came out with the rest from that case lying before you. Why should you venture to speak, even to a stranger, as if you had any reason to doubt his word? I don't understand this at all.'

'For this reason: I have the best reason for believing that this cheque was never drawn by Mr. Buller. And now you see how it becomes my unpleasant duty—'

'Nonsense! As if I hadn't received every one of those cheques straight from his hands! You talk as if you took me for a forger. Well, I suppose I must excuse you, on the ground of over-zeal.'

'It is most improbable that this cheque was drawn by—well, never mind why. I'm bound to tell you that if you refuse to wait here for Mr. Buller's arrival of your own free will, and in your own interest, I shall have to call upon the police to assist me in the execution of my duty towards the bank and its customers and the public at large.'

'Why,' I began, my anger half losing itself in amusement, 'this is something too absurd. You can't call in a constable unless you can give him good reason to suspect me of felony. I have half a mind to let you try, for the fun of the thing. Only it would be wasting my own time. So I'll put an end to your scruples about the public at large by telling you at once that my name is Standish, and that I am solicitor to Mr. Buller, and live at Carcester. And the next time I advise you, as a lawyer, to be more careful how you treat people who come to your bank.'

'You are Mr. Buller's solicitor? Indeed? Of course that *is* important—very important; and no doubt you can send for somebody in Redport who knows you? No—we can't be too careful in these days.'

'I don't know a soul in Redport.'

'No? Hm! Well, Mr. Buller will know you—when he comes.'

'But I tell you he won't get your telegram for at least two days. This is monstrous! I broke out, my amusement turning back into anger again.

'Monstrous or not—Well then, perhaps, as you feel safe from being brought face to face with—I should say, as you are convinced Mr. Buller is not at home, I suppose you have friends or clerks in Carcester who could give evidence as to who you say you are—are, I ought no doubt to say? The telegraph's as open to you as to me.'

'You positively are so insane as to say you will forcibly detain me—*me*—in Redport unless I can convince you that I am myself? And for no reason—'

'You must make up your mind to it. I know what the law is,' said Mr. Richards; 'and—well, not to mince matters, I've already got our police-sergeant waiting in the next room. A messenger from the bank can despatch any summons to any of your friends, if you'll write it down. Yes—it *is* in my power to give you into custody on suspicion of having forged a cheque which you yourself admit has passed through the hands of no third parties—a cheque for 50*l.*, signed John Buller. And as to why I have particular reasons for my belief, I don't mind telling you it's because the bank here has had special notice from the chief branch at Carcester to cash no cheques

signed "John Buller" till we've communicated with the drawer, and to detain the person presenting them, whoever he may be—unless the cheques bear a certain private sign. There's reason for that, you may be sure. And there is the sign on every one of these cheques—except the one for 50*l*.'

'You mean to say that this cheque for 50*l*. is the only one unmarked?'

'The only one.'

'Let me see it, if you please.'

He held it so that I might see it, taking care that I should have no chance of wresting it from his hands. I certainly could not blame him any longer for over-zeal, seeing it was on my own advice he was acting. But what room could I find for a single thought, save that an unmarked cheque, as like those presented by Adam Brown as a cheque could be, *had been received straight from John Buller's very own hands by my very own?* Surely it looked more like witchcraft than forgery.

And yet Adam's effective confession of guilt, and the regularity with which the undoubtedly forged cheques had been presented—I could not make head or tail of it all. I must have been bewildered; I must have seemed confused, as if with guilt or fright, for I was confused in reality. I could not even affect the indignation of injured honesty; I was not indignant with Mr. Richards for being suspicious of what might be witchcraft, but certainly had all the air of a forgery—I, Charles Standish, being the forger!

'It is utterly unintelligible,' said I, using the common phrase of people who won't, rather than can't, explain things that seem going against them. 'But I am sure of one thing—Charles Standish of Carcester I am. And

I don't want to stay in Redport till Monday. I will telegraph, as you say. I'll send word to my wife to—but no; *she's* not in Carcester either just now. I must send for one of the clerks at the office, I'm afraid, and make everybody wonder at what I can have been doing at Redport to need proof of my identity. Give me a form, and I'll write a message for my clerk—'

For my own credit's sake, and out of justice to Mr. Richards's zeal, I chose to wait in an inner office of the bank till somebody whom I knew should come. I need hardly say that Mr. Buller, being away from getting telegrams, never came. But it was not till hours had passed that I began to realise that it was Saturday afternoon—and that my idle dogs of clerks had of course taken advantage of my absence to close the office and go off to play at an exceptionally early hour. Closing time for the bank itself (also earlier than usual on Saturdays) had come when I saw in my mind, as clearly and truly as with my eyes, my telegram lying unopened on my clerk's desk at Carcester—and to-morrow was Sunday.

All I could do was to send off six telegrams to six different people, in the bare hope that one of them might bring over to Redport some respectable citizen of Carcester before the very last train. Not one brought a soul. And I could see what Mr. Richards thought of the result of my telegrams when I had, perforce, to put up with the accommodation of the police-station instead of the hotel, there to remain until John Buller himself should come and set me free.

In effect, I was a prisoner on suspicion of Forgery—and I had in truth presented an unquestionably forged cheque that had been

through no hands but my own ! It was the most unaccountable mystery I had ever known ; and it kept me from sleeping, even more than the discomfort of my cell, as much as if I were really a conscious sharer in the villainies of Adam Brown. This could not be his doing—and what then of the rest, and of his admitted guilt concerning them ? Not even sleep, when it came in an uncomfortable shape at last, let me dream of a possible way through such a mystery.

It was not till Monday afternoon that I received the welcome news that John Buller was on his way to see me at the police-station in company with Mr. Richards. I must say that I had become more anxious now about getting home as fast as I could than about anything else in the world. It is not an amusing thing to be treated, in a strange place, as a suspected felon ; and I have held very strong views about the treatment of unconvicted prisoners ever since that Redport Sunday.

'Here he is, sir,' said Mr. Richards. 'This is the—gentleman who presented that cheque on Saturday morning. I hope and trust it's all right ; but in these times, you see, one can't be too—'

'Thank Heaven, at last !' said I, springing from my seat, and holding out my hand. 'I've never passed so long a day since I was born ; but I certainly don't complain of Mr. Richards—he's been zealous enough, anyhow ; and I only wish *my* clerks would simply do what they're bid, and give up that confounded habit of thinking for themselves. If you ever have to leave the Company's service, Mr. Richards, for want of thinking-power, never mind ; I'll take you into mine. Well, Mr.

Buller, you must have slipped into drawing *one* unmarked cheque, after all ?'

'No, sir !' said John Buller, with strange vehemence, for him. 'No—I did *not* draw that cheque—with or without a sign. I drew no cheque for fifty pounds at all. And if you're the rascal that has been up to these games, and got it all on poor young Adam's shoulders, I'm glad I see you here ; I'm glad of it, with all my heart and soul. I'm hanged if I didn't know I was right, all along. Adam Brown, if a letter can find him, poor lad, goes back to my works at Redport this very hour !'

Could I believe my ears ?

'You—John Buller—you believe *me* guilty of having forged cheques, and tried to throw the guilt of it upon Adam Brown ? Think for one least moment of what you are saying—'

'Think ? Thinking's plain enough, it seems to me—a mile too plain by the longest chalks you can draw. It's likelier anybody would be a rogue than the orphan lad I'd brought up as my own son. I daresay, like enough, he was too taken aback by such a charge to say a word. I wonder he didn't double his fist, and knock me down. But I hope I'm a just man if I'm a bit of a hasty one. I'm not going to be hasty with *you*. If you can explain what's at best an ugly business, say it out like a man.'

'If I didn't respect an old client, and an old friend— But I can't forget how you've been worrying about this business. Explain ? I will, though I don't see how you and I can ever be friends again. You know as well as I do that I never cashed a cheque for you in my life before, or ever was at Redport till the day before yesterday—'

'Ay; so you say.'

'So I do say. And you know that I received that case of cheques and bills—whatever they were, for I never looked at them—from your own hands on Saturday morning.'

'Did you? That's my cheque-case, sure enough. But suppose you did, what then? Because something comes out of it, it doesn't follow it was I who put it in. No, no. I never drew that cheque. You present it to be cashed, and it purports to be drawn, signed, and indorsed by me. You say you received it from me. I say you didn't. And I ought to know; for you couldn't have received a cheque that never was drawn. Justice is justice. Adam Brown goes back to my works; and you'll go to the country's, whoever you are. I don't know what's the right way to start a prosecution, but that's easy known. I'll see Standish this very day.'

'You'll see Standish?'

'Ay, Standish of Carcester, my lawyer. Criminal business isn't his line, he says; but he'll do it for me.'

'You mean I'm to prosecute myself? Well, it all seems queer enough. Perhaps I don't know who I am. Do you?'

'No, sir, I don't, I'm happy to say. Forgers aren't in my line.'

'Good Heaven! Do you mean to deny that I am Mr. Standish of Carcester?'

I saw a very decided smile come over the face of Mr. Richards. And it was not pleasant to see. For if John Buller, as he was quite capable of doing, chose to prosecute me for forgery—well, I should be acquitted, of course, but my character would be gone for ever and a day. The names of ladies are not more delicate than those of professional men.

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'Come, none of that nonsense,' said John Buller, 'you're no more Standish than I'm the Duke of Wellington. It does aggravate me to hear a man talk in that way. If you choose to deny that you're the Duke of Wellington when I say you are, we'll have a wager upon that, and toss up for the winner. You come and dine with me at the Star, both of you, and I'll treat you like princes. We'll eat cheques for fifty pound apiece between slices of brown-bread-and-butter cut thin, with lemon and cayenne. It's very odd, but I took a fancy to you the first minute I saw you. There's something about you put me in mind of somebody or other—I never could remember names. But it's all one, whoever we are. We're the sparks that fly upwards; and, by Jingo, we'll have a jolly good fly.... Who are *you*?' he called out at the top of his voice to Richards. 'You're a murderer, sir, and a forger, and a fool. Come and dine with me at the Star....'

I need not continue the talk of poor John Buller, whom overwork, and loss of faith in the one human being who was dear to him, had driven out of his mind. It was an overwhelming relief when my managing-clerk arrived, and when sufficient explanations were obtained to allow of my return home in company with my poor friend. Even to the zealous Mr. Richards the state of things was as clear as day, so far as he knew.

III.

It was not hard for me, now, to see how John Buller, once assured against his will of Adam's treachery in the first instance, had brooded over the shock, with an

already over-lonely and over-burdened mind, till, as sure as Friday night came round, he, possessed by the demon of monomania—which simply means the abnormal growth of a natural and normal idea—drew the cheque which haunted and fascinated him. If my readers cannot follow the chain of mental association, with its manifold links of time, place, person, and occasion, in which his disturbed brain became tangled and coiled, I fear I cannot hope to make it very clear. But there are very few who have not met with the most extraordinary cases of monomania in some form, and noticed how consistent they are with all outward appearance of sanity. Are there very many of us who have not felt some form of it ourselves in some slight degree? But, fortunately, few of us live altogether alone; few of us are over-trustful or, therefore, half maddened when deceived; most of us have more, if not much more, self-control than was evidently possessed by John Buller. And yet he must have had a great deal. Only the insane can tell the very torture of self-suppression they have to undergo when they feel monomania slowly broadening into a wider, if not deeper, mode of lunacy. For, conscious of its own state every diseased brain must be when that state first begins.

And yet—*could* this be all? The madness of John Buller did not account for the more than apparent guilt of Adam Brown.

It was not till years afterwards—not till my poor old friend had left all his troubles behind him; not till I had long ago given up puzzling my head about the matter—that I one day received a letter bearing an Australian post-mark, and addressed to my-

self in a strange hand. There was nothing curious in that; but, as I read, the story I have been trying to tell came back to me as freshly as if it had all happened yesterday. For thus the letter ran:

‘Sir,—It will doubtless surprise you to receive this from me; for I cannot suppose that you will remember so much as my name. But you will remember—I fear only too well—a clerk in the service of Mr. John Buller, who was dismissed from his service for embezzlement. I am that man; and my reason for calling myself to your remembrance is, that I have at last found myself able to repay the sums that I abstracted wrongfully, and for which only Mr. Buller’s kindness saved me from being sent to gaol. I do not, moreover, want him to think me always such a hopelessly ungrateful and treacherous scoundrel as he must be thinking me. I got into bad ways, knowing them bad all the time. I wanted more money than I could get honestly, and I had to pay it. I needn’t tell *that* story; it’s over now, and no harm done to anybody but me.

‘I was tempted, by what I called to myself need and weakness, to “borrow,” I called it then—to steal, that is to say—some of the money I drew from Redport bank. I had complete control of the accounts at Redport, and I suppose it was all so easy that at first it didn’t so much feel like stealing, and so I went on and on. I used to take sometimes more than fifty pounds together. I’ve sent you a statement of all I took; and I hope it’s correct, for of course I had to muddle up all the accounts. You see, sir, Mr. Buller always used to give me a fifty-pound cheque over and above what I

asked for, meaning, I suppose, to keep plenty of ready-money in the works for the week; and I never told him it was more than was wanted, for the reasons I've written. The only excuse I had is this—I never knew how much I owed to Mr. Buller. I thought I was nothing more to him, and rather less, than any other man. That's no reason I should rob him, but it makes me a bit less of a thorough blackguard. He ought to have had me sent to gaol. And when he didn't, but just as much as told me to go and do no more wrong, as if I'd been his own son—well, sir, it did go to the bottom of all the heart I've got, and I'd like him just to know that he wasn't foolish in being kind. If I ever did another wrong, or mean, or dishonest thing, I should have been the biggest cur on earth. I got a chance in New Zealand, and I should like him to know that his words made a man of me. This is a poor sort of a letter, but I can't say what I feel, and I

won't try.—Trusting to hear from you per return, yours respectfully,
'ADAM BROWN.'

And that is the not wholly unsatisfactory end of a sad story. I suppose that the *first* cheque must have been some sort of a blunder; and that an obstinate man's supposition that forgery on somebody else's part was more probable than a blunder on his own, resulted in—what we have seen. I intended, when I set out, to point a good number of morals, legal and otherwise. But I will content myself with two. One is, that justice has even queerer ways of going to work than law—as when it punishes a man for a fault that hasn't been found out by finding him guilty of one that he has never committed. The other is, that trust, even if carried to the pitch of insanity, is not by any means so mad a thing as it seems. John Buller's over-trust sent him out of his own mind, but it saved another man.

A GLANCE AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

To Constantinople! The far-famed Golden Horn,—the land of Eastern romance, of Pashas, minarets, backshish, harems, eunuchs, Softas, and Grand Viziers; of apathy and corruption; lots of honesty, with a dash of energy, especially if there is any fighting on the *tapis*. What route will you take? If you are Captain Knowall, a Queen's messenger with despatches from Downing-street, or Baron Neuchatel, a financier, bound on obtaining from the Sultan a concession for a line of railways, building quays or bonded warehouses, time must be an object. You will then take the quickest route, *viâ* Paris, Vienna, Bucharest, and Varna, five days from Charing Cross to Stamboul. If you are accredited by Jupiter Tonans as 'our own correspondent,' you will take a berth in one of the Messageries Maritimes steamers from Marseilles, so as to touch at the Piræus, and interview King George and Monsieur Coumoundouros *en route*. But if you are wise you will come with us. We are bound on the most agreeable of missions, business combined with pleasure; just enough of the former to pay the cost of the latter.

The route we have selected is a charming one, with an endless variety of scenery and costume—quite a moving panorama of all that is picturesque—Paris, Turin, Milan, Venice. At the Venice railway-station we jump into a gondola, and glide dreamily down the Grand Canal for the Trieste steamer, moored off St. Mark's Place. At Trieste one of the

Austrian Lloyd's steamers is ready to take us direct to Constantinople, touching only at Corfu and Syra. We are treated right royally on board: the ship is well organised and well appointed, and we are supplied with a liberal table, not forgetting that excellent Hungarian wine, the Schekzarder, which is offered to us *ad libitum*. There is one peculiarity, however, on board. It is everywhere admitted that the Austrians are noted for their polished and courteous manners; but we scarcely expected to see it so displayed as in the 'Notice to Passengers,' in three languages, posted on the doors of the saloon. After enjoining order and regularity among the passengers, and calling on the 'lords of the creation' to do their duty to their fellow-creatures, it concludes as follows:

'Passengers, having a right to be treated like persons of education, will, no doubt, conform themselves to the rules of good society by respecting their fellow-creatures, and paying a due regard to the fair sex.'

We have passed the Hellespont, Sea of Marmora, and are now on the fringe of the Bosphorus. To paint the beauties of the approach to the Queen of Cities we will not attempt. Is it not written in the chronicles of every Eastern traveller? Enough to say that it is as grand and glorious as always admitted. You never can be weary of the panorama. There is 'no deception' about it. The water is as blue as the sky. The mosques, minarets, caiques, and forests of foreign shipping

are all there ; and before you have had time to admire, you are surrounded and almost bewildered by the jabbering of all nations—Turks, Albanians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Circassians, Arabians, Franks, and the scum of the Levant.

If we were asked to be 'cicerone' to an intelligent foreigner in London, we would take a steamer from Westminster to Woolwich. Our dragoman reasons in the same manner, and hires a *caïque* for a trip on the Bosphorus. The *caïque*, the Turkish gondola, is long, narrow, and graceful to look at ; but the reverse of comfortable to seat yourself in. Seat yourself you do not, for you lie down at the bottom of the boat on cushions, and are obliged to keep yourself as steady as if in an outrigger. The depth of the Bosphorus in some parts is unknown ; it is tideless, and along the shores at all points vessels of the largest tonnage can unload. The entire length is fourteen miles, and at the widest part not more than two miles ; the narrowest is perhaps only half a mile ; but, although there is no tide, a swift undercurrent rushes down into the Marmora with such a force that *caïques* have to be towed at certain points.

'Look, mister !' exclaims the gossiping dragoman ; 'look ! Do you see that long straggling mass of marble at the water's edge ? That is the Sultan's Palace of Dolma Baghtche, and yonder, extending for a quarter of a mile, the Tcheragan Palace.' Behind it on the hill is Yildiz Kiosk, originally only a summer-palace, which the Sultan never leaves, except on Fridays to go to mosque to the Selamlık, the Friday prayers.

This being the only chance of seeing his Majesty, we join the crowd at the palace-gates. It

was a very simple affair : a number of gold-laced fat Pashas walk five abreast, preceding the Padi-shah mounted ; a careworn-looking, black-bearded gentleman, slouching on his charger, passes slowly by, and is saluted and cheered by the soldiers lining the passage. The cheer sounds like 'Bourroo-bourroo-rooo-ooo,' just as if they all had a sudden fit of gargling. The Pontiff of Mus-sulmans takes no notice of any one, and looks straight before him. It is contrary to etiquette for Sultans to salute or acknowledge any greeting.

Curious as are the customs in the East, probably few are more interesting than a visit to the Dancing Dervishes. Dancing in church ! What next ? Yet among the Early Christians, as also the Pagans, dancing has constituted a part of the religious ceremonies ; and did not David dance before the Ark, and 'the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances' ?

The practice of dancing in churches was looked upon with favour in France until the twelfth century ; and in Spain, in this very nineteenth century, it forms part of the Easter Sunday ceremonies at the cathedral in Seville. Lady Louisa Tenison, travelling in these parts, speaks of them as being most singular and quite peculiar to Seville. The principal actors are boys, who are placed in the open space in front of the altar, five standing on each side opposite to each other. They begin a slow movement, singing hymns and keeping time with their castanets. A dignitary, disapproving of the custom, tried to stop them ; but this so enraged the authorities that they suddenly shipped off the boys to Rome, so that the Pope might judge for himself. His Holiness saw no-

thing against it, and continued the privilege, allowing them to dance, with their *heads covered*, before the Sacrament; and this is done to this day.

We are now at the door of the mosque of the 'Dancing Dervishes' (Mahometan monks) in Pera, the European quarter of Constantinople, and find present some fifteen or twenty monks in a small octagon-shaped room with a smooth and polished floor. They wear sugar-loafed hats, coarse brown-felt petticoats, a short jacket of the same material, and close white trousers reaching to the ankle. The feet are bare. After saluting the Sheikh and kissing each other on the left cheek reverentially, there is a short exposition of the Koran. They then begin to turn, crossing their arms on the breast, the right hand on the left shoulder, and the left hand on the right shoulder. The petticoats are moving, and assume the shape of spinning tops. Making two or three 'tours' round the chapel gradually and gracefully to a sort of waltz movement, and with eyes cast down, they begin now to stretch out the arms at full length. They are much absorbed in their work, and warm to it with great spirit, and turn faster and faster without touching each other. They slacken and pass in procession before the Sheikh, who mutters a few words of encouragement, and then they are off again faster than ever. At length, after about an hour's exercise, some unobserved signal arrests their movements; and then by degrees, just as a top which has been spinning, they cease altogether. It is time. They are nearly faint with exhaustion. The dancing is accompanied by a concealed orchestra of flutes and pipes, assisted by the thudding sounds of an Indian tom-tom.

The turning movement indicates a confession of the presence everywhere of the Divinity; the right arm is stretched out with palm upwards, as if asking blessings; the left arm has the palm inverted, as if to shower gifts upon others. This sect is allowed to marry, but they must sleep at regular periods in the monasteries.

In another part of Pera are to be seen the 'Howling Dervishes'—a very different performance. No other word would express the almost demoniacal shouts. They *do* howl, and all at once; the unearthly noises are even now ringing in the ears of the writer. The barn-like hall where they perform is hung round with chains, spikes, skewers, and daggers, and other torturing instruments with which they amuse themselves. Seating themselves in a circle, the ninety-nine names of God are repeated ninety-nine times, checked off by the Sheikh, who is in the centre, counting his beads. When they arrive at the last name, *Hoo*, they rise much excited, and range themselves in a line against the wall, holding each other by the hand. They then swing backwards and forwards, and shout,

'La-il-lah ! Il-la-lah !

Hoo-yah ! Hoo !

The *La-il-lah* brings them all forwards, the *Il-la-lah* takes them backwards, the *Hoo-yah* forwards, and then, with a mighty gasp for the great event, the *HOO* comes with a deep and terrible roar. After a long series of shouts, the howls die away like the mournful moans of a wintery wind on a rock-bound coast.

On the occasion of the writer's visit lately, this performance continued for an hour. The Dervishes perspired, foamed at the mouth, and their features became frightfully distorted. Their energy was alarming and fearful. It is by no

means an uncommon occurrence for them, in their frenzy, to fall down in a state of collapse or even to spit blood. See ! What is going to happen now ? A youth with a determined expression comes forward to the Sheikh, whom he allows to fix a skewer in his cheeks ; it enters the flesh, penetrates the cheeks, and the lad remains as calm as the lookers-on, not uttering a sound. Is it a piece of legerdemain ? Not at all ; for you can satisfy your curiosity afterwards by inspecting the martyr. No blood has flowed ; nothing is to be seen beyond a blue mark on either cheek.

In another part of the building during this performance a Sheikh is going through the formality of *trampling on the bodies of patients* brought to him to be healed, and a very singular ceremony it is. If children are to be trampled on, they are carried in and placed on the floor upon the back or stomach, depending on the nature of the ailment. The Sheikh then treads upon the bodies of the children lightly ; but if they are adults, he positively tramples upon them, and, in many cases when the disease warrants it, he just walks over the bodies, backwards and forwards, from end to end ! One youth, about seventeen years of age, was evidently in a very bad way, for he was much favoured by being trodden over every part of his body, with just a finishing tap on the back of the head, as if to remind him of the solemnity of the occasion and the certainty of the cure. In parts of Central Asia people of rank have a Dervish attached to their household, just as an English nobleman has his domestic chaplain on his establishment. He howls all night, and as dawn breaks his noises die away ; so that, as you turn on your restless couch in a

distant part of the town, you can give a fair guess of the time of day from the state of the gentleman's performance !

It is only fair to say that, after observing both ceremonies of 'dancing' and 'howling,' though not moved to actual ridicule, we came away with a feeling of pity and wonder that such mummeries should have such a wonderful influence over so many. They are devout, according to their point of view, and the religious enthusiasm exhibited leaves, at any rate, an impression of genuineness, if not of edification.

We have just spoken of a 'fair guess of the time of day.' The Mahometan fashion of keeping time in Constantinople is a source of much bother to the Giaours. It is always twelve o'clock at sunset. The twenty-four hours are divided into two equal parts of twelve hours each, the first period being night. At thirteen hours after sunset it is one o'clock in the morning. If you want to know the Turkish hour, you must first know when the sun sets.

As to the character of the Turks, it has been said by one of the highest consular authorities that the poorer and humbler he is, the better he is. As he gets money and power, he deteriorates. In the lowest classes you may, and do, meet with honesty ; in the middle classes, seldom ; in the highest, never. The Turk, above all, is a good host. Indeed, hospitality is enjoined by the Koran. We may well take a lesson from him, too, in politeness, especially in conversation. If you are privileged to have an interview with a Turk, you will find him a good listener ; he never interrupts, and never wastes words to make talk. When he has finished, he asks permission to go, and vanishes. He is not given to the odious,

because abused, custom of the 'shake-hands.' His salute, the Temenas, is most graceful. He makes the motion as if to sweep the ground with his right hand, bringing it to his heart, lips, and forehead; thus indicating that all he has on earth is yours, as well as showing his friendliness and constant thoughtfulness for your welfare.

Listen to a true story illustrating the Turk in all his dealings, whether commercially, politically, or as a diplomatist. A peasant was summoned before the Cadi for stealing a sack of onions. 'Now we have thee on the hip, and thou shalt know what it is to incur our displeasure. Bismillah! Choose, slave! Wilt thou pay a thousand piastres, receive a hundred blows of the bastinado, or wilt thou eat the contents of the sack of onions? Quick; choose!' 'Gracious lord, I have no money wherewith to satisfy thee; I fear the bastinado, and will choose rather to eat my onions.' He ate, and was fain to stop, and preferred the bastinado. After some fifty strokes he repents, and thinks he can find somewhere in his house five hundred piastres. But this money was not enough to release him from his troubles; he ate more onions, then there was a little more bastinado. Eventually he received eighty strokes, ate nearly all the onions, and paid the penalty of a thousand piastres in full. So it is in diplomacy. 'O, we cannot listen to such demands, we cannot yield anything!' and in the end, after much prevarication, and suffering loss of prestige, they cave in entirely.

As to the future of Constantinople, do we believe in predictions? Bladavsky, in his curious work, *Isis Unveiled*, treating of Oriental mysteries and superstitions, mentions the following cu-

rious old prophecy, originally in quaint French:

'In twice 200 years,* the Bear
The Crescent will assail;
But if the Cock and Bull unite,
The Bear will not prevail.

In twice ten years again—
Let Islam know and fear—
The Cross shall stand, the Crescent
wane,
Dissolve and disappear!

But, to speak seriously, what is to be done with Constantinople? The Exchequer is at the lowest ebb, the power of borrowing reduced to nil, the Civil List nearly two millions sterling, and an increasing deficit in the revenue. All officials' pay, civil and military, in arrear for months, and general destitution not only in the capital, but in the provinces. Nothing but the halo surrounding the titles of Caliph, Padishah, and Pontiff of Mussulmans could have hitherto prevented the people breaking out; but, tolerant as they are, the camel's back is well-nigh broken. What, then, may happen? A violent change, a bloodless revolution; the various provinces declared independent; the Sultan and Pashas and all appertaining to the Executive deported to Asia, say Broussa. Then there seem to be two remedies—either to found a new empire by putting the Khedive of Egypt at the head of affairs, or the much more desirable plan of declaring Constantinople a Free City, when untold wealth must follow. The resources of Turkey are almost incalculable. The forests and minerals alone are sufficient to repay foreign capital a hundredfold. We say, then, let the country be opened to foreign industry and energy. *Avanti!*

E. D.

* The Turks occupied Constantinople in 1453. In twice 200 years, 1853-54, the Crimean War took place. Peace was proclaimed in 1856. In twice ten years, 1876, the revolt in Herzegovina had broken out, and then came the Russo-Turkish War.

A NIGHT AMONG THE NIHILISTS.

'ROBINSON, the boss wants you !'

'The Dickens he does !' thought I ; for Mr. Dickson, Odessa agent of Bailey & Co., corn-merchants, was a bit of a Tartar, as I had learned to my cost. 'What's the row now ?' I demanded of my fellow-clerk ; 'has he got scent of our Nicolaieff escapade, or what is it ?'

'No idea,' said Gregory : 'the old boy seems in a good enough humour ; some business matter, probably. But don't keep him waiting.' So, summoning up an air of injured innocence, to be ready for all contingencies, I marched into the lion's den.

Mr. Dickson was standing before the fire in a Briton's time-honoured attitude, and motioned me into a chair in front of him. 'Mr. Robinson,' he said, 'I have great confidence in your discretion and common sense. The follies of youth will break out, but I think that you have a sterling foundation to your character underlying any superficial levity.'

I bowed.

'I believe,' he continued, 'that you can speak Russian pretty fluently.'

I bowed again.

'I have, then,' he proceeded, 'a mission which I wish you to undertake, and on the success of which your promotion may depend. I would not trust it to a subordinate, were it not that duty ties me to my post at present.'

'You may depend upon my doing my best, sir,' I replied.

'Right, sir, quite right ! What I wish you to do is briefly this : The line of railway has just been

opened to Solteff, some hundred miles up the country. Now I wish to get the start of the other Odessa firms in securing the produce of that district, which I have reason to believe may be had at very low prices. You will proceed by rail to Solteff, and interview a Mr. Dimidoff, who is the largest landed proprietor in the town. Make as favourable terms as you can with him. Both Mr. Dimidoff and I wish the whole thing to be done as quietly and secretly as possible, in fact that nothing should be known about the matter until the grain appears in Odessa. I desire it for the interests of the firm, and Mr. Dimidoff on account of the prejudice his peasantry entertain against exportation. You will find yourself expected at the end of your journey, and will start to-night. Money shall be ready for your expenses. Good-morning, Mr. Robinson ; I hope you won't fail to realise the good opinion I have of your abilities.'

'Gregory,' I said, as I strutted into the office, 'I'm off on a mission, a secret mission, my boy, an affair of thousands of pounds. Lend me your little portmanteau, mine's too imposing, and tell Ivan to pack it. A Russian millionaire expects me at the end of my journey. Don't breathe a word of it to any of Simpkins's people, or the whole game will be up. Keep it dark !'

I was so charmed at being, as it were, behind the scenes, that I crept about the office all day in a sort of cloak-and-bloody-dagger style, with responsibility and brooding care marked upon every

feature; and when at night I stepped out and stole down to the station, the unprejudiced observer would certainly have guessed, from my general behaviour, that I had emptied the contents of the strong-box, before starting, into that little valise of Gregory's. It was imprudent of him, by the way, to leave English labels pasted all over it. However, I could only hope that the 'Londons' and 'Birminghams' would attract no attention, or, at least, that no rival corn-merchant might deduce from them who I was and what my errand might be.

Having paid the necessary roubles and got my ticket, I ensconced myself in the corner of a snug Russian car, and pondered over my extraordinary good fortune. Dickson was growing old now, and if I could make my mark in this matter it might be a great thing for me. Dreams arose of a partnership in the firm. The noisy wheels seemed to clank out 'Bailey, Robinson, & Co.,' 'Bailey, Robinson, & Co.,' in a monotonous refrain, which gradually sank into a hum, and finally ceased as I dropped into a deep sleep. Had I known the experience which awaited me at the end of my journey it would hardly have been so peaceable.

I awoke with an uneasy feeling that some one was watching me closely, nor was I mistaken. A tall dark man had taken up his position on the seat opposite, and his black sinister eyes seemed to look through me and beyond me, as if he wished to read my very soul. Then I saw him glance down at my little trunk.

'Good Heavens!' thought I, 'here's Simpkins's agent, I suppose. It was careless of Gregory to leave those confounded labels on the valise.'

I closed my eyes for a time, but on reopening them I again caught the stranger's earnest gaze.

'From England, I see,' he said in Russian, showing a row of white teeth in what was meant to be an amiable smile.

'Yes,' I replied, trying to look unconcerned, but painfully aware of my failure.

'Travelling for pleasure, perhaps?' said he.

'Yes,' I answered eagerly. 'Certainly, for pleasure; nothing else.'

'Of course not,' said he, with a shade of irony in his voice. 'Englishmen always travel for pleasure, don't they? O no, nothing else.'

His conduct was mysterious, to say the least of it. It was only explainable upon two hypotheses—he was either a madman, or he was the agent of some firm bound upon the same errand as myself, and determined to show me that he guessed my little game. They were about equally unpleasant, and, on the whole, I was relieved when the train pulled up in the tumble-down shed which does duty for a station in the rising town of Solteff—Solteff, whose resources I was about to open out, and whose commerce I was to direct into the great world channels. I almost expected to see a triumphal arch as I stepped on to the platform.

I was to be expected at the end of my journey, so Mr. Dickson had informed me. I looked about among the motley crowd, but saw no Mr. Dimidoff. Suddenly a slovenly unshaved man passed me rapidly, and glanced first at me and then at my trunk—that wretched trunk, the cause of all my woes. He disappeared in the crowd; but in a little time came strolling past me again, and contrived to whisper as he did so, 'Follow me, but at some distance'

immediately setting off out of the station and down the street at a rapid pace. Here was mystery with a vengeance! I trotted along in his rear with my valise, and on turning the corner found a rough droschky waiting for me. My unshaven friend opened the door, and I stepped in.

'Is Mr. Dim—' I was beginning.

'Hush!' he cried. 'No names, no names; the very walls have ears. You will hear all to-night;' and with that assurance he closed the door, and, seizing the reins, we drove off at a rapid pace; so rapid, that I saw my black-eyed acquaintance of the railway-carriage gazing after us in surprise until we were out of sight.

I thought over the whole matter as we jogged along in that abominable springless conveyance.

'They say the nobles are tyrants in Russia,' I mused; 'but it seems to me to be the other way about, for here's this poor Mr. Dimidoff, who evidently thinks his ex-servants will rise and murder him if he raises the price of grain in the district by exporting some out of it. Fancy being obliged to have recourse to all this mystery and deception in order to sell one's own property! Why, it's worse than an Irish landlord. It is monstrous! Well, he doesn't seem to live in a very aristocratic quarter either,' I soliloquised, as I gazed out at the narrow crooked streets and the unkempt dirty Muscovites whom we passed. 'I wish Gregory or some one was with me, for it's a cut-throat-looking shop! By Jove, he's pulling up; we must be there!'

We were there, to all appearance; for the droschky stopped, and my driver's shaggy head appeared through the aperture.

'It is here, most honoured master,' he said, as he helped me to alight.

'Is Mr. Dimi—' I commenced; but he interrupted me again.

'Anything but names,' he whispered; 'anything but that. You are too used to a land that is free. Caution, O sacred one!' and he ushered me down a stone-flagged passage, and up a stair at the end of it. 'Sit for a few minutes in this room,' he said, opening a door, 'and a repast will be served for you;' and with that he left me to my own reflections.

'Well,' thought I, 'whatever Mr. Dimidoff's house may be like, his servants are undoubtedly well trained. "O sacred one!" and "revered master!" I wonder what he'd call old Dickson himself, if he is so polite to the clerk! I suppose it wouldn't be the thing to smoke in this little crib; but I could do a pipe nicely. By the way, how confoundedly like a cell it looks!'

It certainly did look like a cell. The door was an iron one, and enormously strong, while the single window was closely barred. The floor was of wood, and sounded hollow and insecure as I strode across it. Both floor and walls were thickly splashed with coffee or some other dark liquid. On the whole it was far from being a place where one would be likely to become unreasonably festive.

I had hardly concluded my survey when I heard steps approaching down the corridor, and the door was opened by my old friend of the droschky. He announced that my dinner was ready, and, with many bows and apologies for leaving me in what he called the 'dismissal room,' he led me down the passage, and into a large and beautifully furnished apartment. A table was spread for two in the centre of it, and by the fire was standing a man very little older than myself. He turned as I came in, and stepped

forward to meet me with every symptom of profound respect.

'So young and yet so honoured!' he exclaimed; and then seeming to recollect himself, he continued: 'Pray sit at the head of the table. You must be fatigued by your long and arduous journey. We dine *tête-à-tête*; but the others assemble afterwards.'

'Mr. Dimidoff, I presume?' said I.

'No, sir,' said he, turning his keen gray eyes upon me. 'My name is Petrokine; you mistake me perhaps for one of the others. But now, not a word of business until the council meets. Try your *chef's* soup; you will find it excellent, I think.'

Who Mr. Petrokine or the others might be I could not conceive. Land stewards of Dimidoff's, perhaps; though the name did not seem familiar to my companion. However, as he appeared to shun any business questions at present, I gave in to his humour, and we conversed on social life in England—a subject in which he displayed considerable knowledge and acuteness. His remarks, too, on Malthus and the laws of population were wonderfully good, though savouring somewhat of Radicalism.

'By the way,' he remarked, as we smoked a cigar over our wine, 'we should never have known you but for the English labels on your luggage; it was the luckiest thing in the world that Alexander noticed them. We had had no personal description of you; indeed we were prepared to expect a somewhat older man. You are young indeed, sir, to be intrusted with such a mission.'

'My employer trusts me,' I replied; 'and we have learned in our trade that youth and shrewdness are not incompatible.'

'Your remark is true, sir,' returned my newly-made friend; 'but I am surprised to hear you call our glorious association a trade! Such a term is gross indeed to apply to a body of men banded together to supply the world with that which it is yearning for, but which, without our exertions, it can never hope to attain. A spiritual brotherhood would be a more fitting term.'

'By Jove!' thought I, 'how pleased the boss would be to hear him! He must have been in the business himself, whoever he is.'

'Now, sir,' said Mr. Petrokine, 'the clock points to eight, and the council must be already sitting. Let us go up together, and I will introduce you. I need hardly say that the greatest secrecy is observed, and that your appearance is anxiously awaited.'

I turned over in my mind as I followed him how I might best fulfil my mission and secure the most advantageous terms. They seemed as anxious as I was in the matter, and there appeared to be no opposition, so perhaps the best thing would be to wait and see what they would propose.

I had hardly come to this conclusion when my guide swung open a large door at the end of a passage, and I found myself in a room larger and even more gorgeously fitted up than the one in which I had dined. A long table, covered with green baize and strewn with papers, ran down the middle, and round it were sitting fourteen or fifteen men conversing earnestly. The whole scene reminded me forcibly of a gambling hell I had visited some time before.

Upon our entrance the company rose and bowed. I could not but remark that my companion attracted no attention, while every eye

was turned upon me with a strange mixture of surprise and almost servile respect. A man at the head of the table, who was remarkable for the extreme pallor of his face as contrasted with his blue-black hair and moustache, waved his hand to a seat beside him, and I sat down.

'I need hardly say,' said Mr. Petrokine, 'that Gustave Berger, the English agent, is now honouring us with his presence. He is young, indeed, Alexis,' he continued to my pale-faced neighbour, 'and yet he is of European reputation.'

'Come, draw it mild!' thought I, adding aloud, 'If you refer to me, sir, though I am indeed acting as English agent, my name is not Berger, but Robinson—Mr. Tom Robinson, at your service.'

A laugh ran round the table.

'So be it, so be it,' said the man they called Alexis. 'I commend your discretion, most honoured sir. One cannot be too careful. Preserve your English *sobriquet* by all means. I regret that any painful duty should be performed upon this auspicious evening; but the rules of our association must be preserved at any cost to our feelings, and a dismissal is inevitable to-night.'

'What the deuce is the fellow driving at?' thought I. 'What is it to me if he does give his servant the sack? This Dimidoff, wherever he is, seems to keep a private lunatic asylum.'

'Take out the gag!' The words fairly shot through me, and I started in my chair. It was Petrokine who spoke. For the first time I noticed that a burly stout man, sitting at the other end of the table, had his arms tied behind his chair and a handkerchief round his mouth. A horrible suspicion began to creep into my heart. Where was I? Was I in

Mr. Dimidoff's? Who were these men with their strange words?

'Take out the gag!' repeated Petrokine; and the handkerchief was removed.

'Now, Paul Ivanovitch,' said he, 'what have you to say before you go?'

'Not a dismissal, sirs,' he pleaded, 'not a dismissal; anything but that! I will go into some distant land, and my mouth shall be closed for ever. I will do anything that the society asks; but pray, pray do not dismiss me.'

'You know our laws, and you know your crime,' said Alexis, in a cold harsh voice. 'Who drove us from Odessa by his false tongue and his double face? Who wrote the anonymous letter to the Governor? Who cut the wire that would have destroyed the arch-tyrant? You did, Paul Ivanovitch; and you must die.'

I leaned back in my chair and fairly gasped.

'Remove him!' said Petrokine; and the man of the droschky with two others forced him out.

I heard the footsteps pass down the passage, and then a door open and shut. Then came a sound as of a struggle, ended by a heavy crunching blow and a dull thud.

'So perish all who are false to their oath,' said Alexis solemnly; and a hoarse 'Amen' went up from his companions.

'Death alone can dismiss us from our order,' said another man further down; 'but Mr. Berg—Mr. Robinson is pale. The scene has been too much for him after his long journey from England.'

'O Tom, Tom,' thought I, 'if ever you get out of this scrape you'll turn over a new leaf. You're not fit to die, and that's a fact.' It was only too evident to me now that by some strange misconception I had got in among a gang of cold-blooded Nihilists, who

mistook me for one of their order. I felt, after what I had witnessed, that my only chance of life was to try to play the rôle thus forced upon me until an opportunity for escape should present itself; so I tried hard to regain my air of self-possession, which had been so rudely shaken.

'I am indeed fatigued,' I replied, 'but I feel stronger now. Excuse my momentary weakness.'

'It was but natural,' said a man with a thick beard at my right hand. 'And now, most honoured sir, how goes the cause in England?'

'Remarkably well,' I answered.

'Has the great commissioner condescended to send a missive to the Solteff branch?' asked Petrokine.

'Nothing in writing,' I replied.

'But he has spoken of it?'

'Yes: he said he had watched it with feelings of the liveliest satisfaction,' I returned.

'Tis well! 'tis well!' ran round the table.

I felt giddy and sick from the critical nature of my position. Any moment a question might be asked which would show me in my true colours. I rose and helped myself from a decanter of brandy which stood on a side table. The potent liquor flew to my excited brain, and as I sat down I felt reckless enough to be half amused at my position, and inclined to play with my tormentors. I still, however, had all my wits about me.

'You have been to Birmingham?' asked the man with the beard.

'Many times,' said I.

'Then you have of course seen the private workshop and arsenal?'

'I have been over them both more than once.'

'It is still, I suppose, entirely unsuspected by the police?' continued my interrogator.

'Entirely,' I replied.

'Can you tell us how it is that so large a concern is kept so completely secret?'

Here was a poser, but my native impudence and the brandy seemed to come to my aid.

'That is information,' I replied, 'which I do not feel justified in divulging even here. In withholding it I am acting under the direction of the chief commissioner.'

'You are right—perfectly right,' said my original friend Petrokine. 'You will no doubt make your report to the central office at Moscow before entering into such details.'

'Exactly so,' I replied, only too happy to get a lift out of my difficulty.

'We have heard,' said Alexis, 'that you were sent to inspect the Livadia. Can you give us any particulars about it?'

'Anything you ask I will endeavour to answer,' I replied, in desperation.

'Have any orders been made in Birmingham concerning it?'

'None when I left England.'

'Well, well, there's plenty of time yet,' said the man with the beard—'many months. Will the bottom be of wood or iron?'

'Of wood,' I answered at random.

'Tis well!' said another voice. 'And what is the breadth of the Clyde below Greenock?'

'It varies much,' I replied; 'on an average about eighty yards.'

'How many men does she carry?' asked an anæmic-looking youth at the foot of the table, who seemed more fit for a public school than this den of murder.

'About three hundred,' said I.

'A floating coffin!' said the young Nihilist, in a sepulchral voice.

'Are the store-rooms on a level

with or underneath the state cabins? asked Petrokine.

'Underneath,' said I decisively, though I need hardly say I had not the smallest conception.

'And now, most honoured sir,' said Alexis, 'tell us what was the reply of Bauer the German Socialist to Ravinsky's proclamation.'

Here was a deadlock with a vengeance. Whether my cunning would have extricated me from it or not was never decided, for Providence hurried me from one dilemma into another and a worse one.

A door slammed down-stairs, and rapid footsteps were heard approaching. Then came a loud tap outside, followed by two smaller ones.

'The sign of the society!' said Petrokine; 'and yet we are all present; who can it be?'

The door was thrown open, and a man entered, dusty and travel-stained, but with an air of authority and power stamped on every feature of his harsh but expressive face. He glanced round the table, scanning each countenance carefully. There was a start of surprise in the room. He was evidently a stranger to them all.

'What means this intrusion, sir?' said my friend with the beard.

'Intrusion!' said the stranger. 'I was given to understand that I was expected, and had looked forward to a warmer welcome from my fellow-associates. I am personally unknown to you, gentlemen, but I am proud to think that my name should command some respect among you. I am Gustave Berger, the agent from England, bearing letters from the chief commissioner to his well-beloved brothers of Solteff.'

One of their own bombs could hardly have created greater surprise had it been fired in the midst of them. Every eye was

fixed alternately on me and upon the newly-arrived agent.

'If you are indeed Gustave Berger,' said Petrokine, 'who is this?'

'That I am Gustave Berger these credentials will show,' said the stranger, as he threw a packet upon the table. 'Who that man may be I know not; but if he has intruded himself upon the lodge under false pretences, it is clear that he must never carry out of the room what he has learned. Speak, sir,' he added, addressing me: 'who and what are you?'

I felt that my time had come. My revolver was in my hip-pocket; but what was that against so many desperate men? I grasped the butt of it, however, as a drowning man clings to a straw, and I tried to preserve my coolness as I glanced round at the cold vindictive faces turned towards me.

'Gentlemen,' I said, 'the rôle I have played to-night has been a purely involuntary one on my part. I am no police spy, as you seem to suspect, nor, on the other hand, have I the honour to be a member of your association. I am an inoffensive corn-dealer, who, by an extraordinary mistake, has been forced into this unpleasant and awkward position.'

I paused for a moment. Was it my fancy that there was a peculiar noise in the street—a noise as of many feet treading softly? No, it had died away; it was but the throbbing of my own heart.

'I need hardly say,' I continued, 'that anything I may have heard to-night will be safe in my keeping. I pledge my solemn honour as a gentleman that not one word of it shall transpire through me.'

The senses of men in great physical danger become strangely acute, or their imagination plays

them curious tricks. My back was towards the door as I sat, but I could have sworn that I heard heavy breathing behind it. Was it the three minions whom I had seen before in the performance of their hateful functions, and who, like vultures, had sniffed another victim?

I looked round the table. Still the same hard cruel faces. Not one glance of sympathy. I cocked the revolver in my pocket.

There was a painful silence, which was broken by the harsh grating voice of Petrokine.

'Promises are easily made and easily broken,' he said. 'There is but one way of securing eternal silence. It is our lives or yours. Let the highest among us speak.'

'You are right, sir,' said the English agent; 'there is but one course open. He must be dismissed.'

I knew what that meant in their confounded jargon, and sprang to my feet.

'By Heaven,' I shouted, putting my back against the door, 'you sha'n't butcher a free Englishman like a sheep! The first among you who stirs, drops!'

A man sprang at me. I saw along the sights of my Derringer the gleam of a knife and the demoniacal face of Gustave Berger. Then I pulled the trigger, and, with his hoarse scream sounding in my ears, I was felled to the ground by a crashing blow from behind. Half unconscious and pressed down by some heavy weight, I heard the noise of shouts and blows above me, and then I fainted away.

When I came to myself I was lying among the *débris* of the door, which had been beaten in on the top of me. Opposite were a dozen of the men who had lately sat in judgment upon me, tied two and two, and guarded by a

score of Russian soldiers. Beside me was the corpse of the ill-fated English agent, the whole face blown in by the force of the explosion. Alexis and Petrokine were both lying on the floor like myself, bleeding profusely.

'Well, young fellow, you've had a narrow escape,' said a hearty voice in my ear.

I looked up, and recognised my black-eyed acquaintance of the railway-carriage.

'Stand up,' he continued: 'you're only a bit stunned; no bones broken. It's no wonder I mistook you for the Nihilist agent, when the very lodge itself was taken in. Well, you're the only stranger who ever came out of this den alive. Come down-stairs with me. I know who you are, and what you are after now; I'll take you to Mr. Dimidoff. Nay, don't go in there,' he cried, as I walked towards the door of the cell into which I had been originally ushered. 'Keep out of that; you've seen evil sights enough for one day. Come down and have a glass of liquor.'

He explained as we walked back to the hotel that the police of Solteff, of which he was the chief, had had warning and been on the look-out during some time for this Nihilistic emissary. My arrival in so unfrequented a place, coupled with my air of secrecy and the English labels on that confounded portmanteau of Gregory's, had completed the business.

I have little more to tell. My Socialistic acquaintances were all either transported to Siberia or executed. My mission was performed to the satisfaction of my employers. My conduct during the whole business has won me promotion, and my prospects for life have been improved since that horrible night the remembrance of which still makes me shiver.

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER X.

MR. DOYLE'S CAPITALIST.

'I THOUGHT you had construed my words *too* literally,' said Mr. Pousnett to his manager, whom he encountered and stopped in Leadenhall-street, 'and never meant to enter the office again.'

Had it not been for that interview in Bush-lane, Robert felt he would have turned very sick; for there was a ring of truth in Mr. Pousnett's voice, and a genuineness in his manner, which told the younger man, had he stayed away altogether, his principal might not have proved inconsolable.

But, as matters stood, everything was not lost—one chance still remained. Not yet did it seem necessary for him to face the question of seeking another situation, or of commencing on his 'own account'—Heaven save the mark!—with Mr. McCullagh's five hundred pounds and Mr. McCullagh's supervision.

'I am very sorry, sir,' he answered, 'to be so late; I hope you will excuse me. Last night my father asked me to go round to Basinghall-street this morning, and then—'

'Any change in the wind there?' interrupted Mr. Pousnett, unheeding the two last words in Robert's unfinished sentence.

'Not as regards the partnership, though he seemed willing enough to assist me in a small way. Since I left him, however, I have seen a cousin of mine, who

thinks I can get the money you require through another source. I presume, sir,' hurried on Robert, speaking thickly and nervously from sheer excitement, 'that if the seven thousand pounds be forthcoming it will make no difference to you who advances it?'

Just for an instant Mr. Pousnett hesitated; then he said slowly,

'Always supposing he be respectable.'

'He is quite respectable,' answered Robert, who was, had he only known it, saying a great deal for Mr. Doyle.

'In that case,' agreed Mr. Pousnett, 'if you are able to find the money I still adhere to my offer. Clearly understand, however, the amount must be paid in cash. I was willing in your father's case to concede something, and take bills; but I will not take any other man's paper.'

'I quite understand that, sir,' replied the younger McCullagh, who had not till the present instant given the matter a thought.

'And when do you imagine you shall know for certain what your friend can do for you?' asked Mr. Pousnett, flicking a grain of dust off his glove as he spoke.

'In a very few days—within a week,' said Robert, who was not going to cast his fate into the scales within the next twenty-four hours if he could help it. One morning had done wonders in raising his hopes; what might not seven mornings do in the way of making those hopes certainties?

'Very well, then; for a week the matter shall remain open,' agreed Mr. Pousnett, 'or even longer, if you think you see your way to a satisfactory conclusion. When you get to the office you will find several things waiting your attention.'

'I did not mean to be so late, sir; but when one is talking time slips away, and—'

'It is not of any consequence,' said Mr. Pousnett, cutting across his manager's apologies; and then he proceeded towards the Exchange, while his manager sped along in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile Mr. Doyle was standing in his office, one arm resting on the chimneypiece, one foot placed on the fender, looking at the fire.

He stood thus for some time quite quiet. From his rapt contemplation of the smouldering coals, any one might have imagined he was considering some abstruse problem connected with the laws of heat. Usually a busy man, and one not given to reverie, the change which had come over him since the cousins quitted his office was remarkable. If they had left him the Philosopher's Stone for analysis, he could not have appeared absorbed in a more profound reverie.

At length in a moment his mood changed. He took his foot off the fender, and planted it firmly on the ground. He lifted his arm from the chimneypiece, and, feeling for his watch, looked at the time; then, crossing to the table, he placed such correspondence as the morning's post had brought in one of the drawers, and locked it up; after which he put on his hat and top-coat, and, crossing the outer office, went out, saying merely in passing to his clerk, who had returned some time before,

'I shall not be back much before two o'clock, James.'

'Very well, sir,' answered James demurely. 'Any message, sir, for any one who calls?'

'None,' was the emphatic reply, and straightway Mr. Doyle, in unconscious emulation of Mr. Pousnett's example, pursued his way likewise to the heart of the City.

But he had no intention of going on 'Change; he had nothing in the way of merchandise to buy or sell. Foreign bills often came into his hands; but not such foreign bills as are offered and purchased at high noon where men do congregate. Ah, no, not there!

Mr. Doyle's way led him to many banks. The business in which he was engaged required the coöperation of several obliging managers, just as the insurance risk upon some great concern or ship has to be divided amongst various offices and underwriters. Save Rothschilds or the Old Lady in Threadneedle-street, no bank was too big for him. Except it appeared in the shape of some outcome of a loan-office or friendly society, none seemed too small. He had to do with the most modest of private banks and the largest of joint-stocks; he kept what he called a little account with most of the leading houses in Lombard-street, and maintained many other accounts besides. No one could have accused Mr. Doyle of trusting all his eggs in one basket; the wonder was how he contrived to procure even one egg for all the nests he made.

Having finished his business with the great establishments, Mr. Doyle sought out a dingy edifice in a narrow lane. On the doors, innocent for years of fresh paint or varnish, a brass plate bore the name of a most obscure firm of

bankers—men who, nevertheless, did a good and thriving business amongst small and struggling traders. Inside, the place looked as dull and shabby as though it were out-at-elbows with Fortune; the floor was dirty, the counters were of painted deal, the brass fittings looked as though they had never been cleaned for a quarter of a century. The principal clerk sat perched up on a high stool behind an old desk covered with green baize, spattered all over with ink-stains and notched by the penknives of successive generations of clerks with initials and hieroglyphics, some of which were almost as old as the bank itself.

Mr. Doyle was evidently an accustomed and welcome visitor. At sight of him a young lad nodded brightly in answer to his words of greeting; a cashier came forward to take his cheque, and the clerk descended from his stool and advanced to the counter.

'Mr. Meakin in?' asked the new-comer.

'No, Mr. Doyle, he is not in at present; and, in fact, I do not think he will be back this afternoon. Anything I can have the pleasure of doing for you to-day, sir?' and the clerk rubbed his hands jubilantly. The sight of this just man and clever financier was more than grateful to him.

'I only want a few pounds,' was the reply; 'as usual, I have left myself without a sixpence.'

As if leaving oneself without a sixpence was the best joke imaginable, the boy, the cashier, and the head-clerk laughed in unison.

'You will have your jest, Mr. Doyle,' said the eldest of the three. 'Come in, sir, and Artill will bring you your change. Would you like a note, or all in gold; and do you want any silver? Very well, sir! All in gold, Artill, you hear! Sit down, pray; and

having got Mr. Doyle into the dismal stuffy little office, sacred to the firm when any of those gentlemen were at the bank, the clerk pulled forward an ancient arm-chair and again earnestly entreated the visitor to be seated.

'Well, Fletcher, and what is the best of your news?' asked Mr. Doyle, stretching out his legs and crossing his arms as he put the question.

'News, sir!' repeated Fletcher. 'Lord bless you, there is never any news here! Year in, year out, it is just the same old humdrum routine.'

'You have not been making your fortune, then, I presume?'

'No; and what is worse, I am not likely to make it.'

'That is a pity; but there is one comfort—you are not placed in a position where you could easily lose one if even you felt inclined.'

'You may take an oath of that, Mr. Doyle, so long as Mr. Meakin has his eyesight.'

Mr. Doyle laughed.

'Sees a new necktie, does he not, on the spot?'

'That he does. The boy out there, Charley, declares he knows when anybody puts on a fresh pair of socks.'

'It is a fault in the right direction,' observed Mr. Doyle. 'Even his failings, Fletcher, lean to virtue's side. Thank you,' he added, speaking to the cashier, who at this juncture laid a little pile of gold on the table beside him; 'quite correct: I am obliged. And so there is nothing new with you, Mr. Fletcher?'

'No, Mr. Doyle; we are still singing the same old song.'

'To the same melodious accompaniment,' suggested Mr. Doyle, letting the sovereigns slip slowly from the fingers of his right hand into the palm of his left.

'As you say, sir, to the same accompaniment.'

Mr. Doyle reversed his previous experiment and let the gold slip gently and tenderly from his left hand into his right; then he produced a little canvas bag, poured the coins into it, tied a scrap of red tape round the neck, and thrust the precious parcel into his pocket. This operation performed, he rose to go; in fact, was at the door of the office, when he stopped suddenly.

'O, by the bye,' he said, 'I recollect now what I was going to ask you. Do you know anything of a Mr. Pousnett?'

'I know there is a Mr. Pousnett, a very wealthy merchant. Do you mean that gentleman?'

'Very likely. His place is somewhere in or off Leadenhall-street.'

'The same, sir. He is in an enormous way of business; trades all over the world.'

'Does he, now?' said Mr. Doyle suggestively.

'Bless you, yes! He is one of the merchant princes of the City.'

'Any of his paper ever come here?'

'No such luck, sir.'

'Isn't there even one amongst your many customers who has any transactions with him, then?'

'Our people are all of them—most of them, I mean,' added Fletcher, correcting himself, mindful he was addressing a customer, 'in a small way. We have had consequently Pousnetts' cheques here occasionally, but never any paper. The firm won't accept a bill for what that house calls a trifling amount; they pay cash, and deduct five per cent.'

'In other words, they discount their own bills at twenty per cent: not a bad notion,' commented Mr. Doyle.

'Five per cent per annum, sir,'

explained Messrs. Meakin's head-clerk.

'Even that means a profit,' said Mr. Doyle. 'I wonder, now, what amount a house like that considers trifling. It would be interesting for poor people like us to know that, eh, Fletcher?'

'You have such a way of putting things, Mr. Doyle!' exclaimed Fletcher. 'As if all the world doesn't know you are as rich as any man need desire to be!'

'I am not at all rich,' was the answer. 'I am very poor in comparison to Pousnett. I have to look sharply after sovereigns—shillings, indeed, for that matter. How much do you suppose the big merchant in Leadenhall-street regards as a bagatelle?'

'I can't say exactly; but I have heard five hundred pounds. I think the limit is about five hundred.'

'After that I may go,' said Mr. Doyle, laughing; 'though I really did hear this morning something even better.'

'What was it, sir, if I may make so bold as to ask?'

'Only the name of a man who will neither take nor give a bill; who, in fact, has never drawn nor accepted since he started in business.'

'That must be old McCullagh in Basinghall-street.'

'You are right; old McCullagh is the man.'

'Have you had any business dealings with him, Mr. Doyle?' asked Fletcher tentatively.

'To quote your own eloquent words, my friend, "no such luck." I should like to have a deal with him, only that, as I suppose you know, it is said, "A canny Scot would outwit Shylock any day;" what chance should I have in such an encounter?'

If the expression of Mr. Fletcher's face at that moment were

any reflex of what was passing in his mind, he thought Mr. Doyle's chance would be a remarkably good one; but he only said,

'I have always heard old McCullagh spoken of as a very fair-dealing sort of man. Hard and careful about a halfpenny, but just.'

'You do not know him, then, personally?'

'No; I have seen him. A queer-looking little fellow he is too; and I am acquainted with those who have done business with him; but I never spoke to Mr. McCullagh in my life.'

'His sons seem likely to do even better than their father.'

'Indeed! How many sons has he, Mr. Doyle?'

'I am not sure; two, at any rate.'

'And they are in a way of pushing their fortunes?'

'Well, yes. I think you will say so when I tell you one of them, who has been in a Liverpool house, is about to marry the daughter of his employer, and become one of the firm; and the eldest son—'

'He is manager at Pousnetts', I just remember,' interpolated Mr. Fletcher, as Mr. Doyle paused.

'Quite right; and they have offered him a partnership.'

'You cannot mean that, sir!'

'I do; it is all but settled. The matter might have been arranged long ago, but for some stupid delay and hesitation on the part of old McCullagh.'

'He did not want to come down with the amount of cash needful, I suppose?' conjectured Mr. Fletcher.

'Very likely. He threw impediments in the way, at any rate; but they are all removed, I am told.'

'He'll just go mad with pride now,' said the head-clerk. 'How

some people do get on, to be sure! They say he came to London without a shoe to his foot, and began business in a cellar; and look at him now! Why, before he dies, he'll be amongst the first in the City!'

'I believe Mr. Pousnett has the highest opinion of old McCullagh—asks him to dine, and all that sort of thing.'

'Isn't it just wonderful how one successful man finds out another?' observed Mr. Fletcher plaintively. 'It does not seem to matter how far divided they may be in other respects as long as they are *rich*—merely rich.'

'They are like the rogues. If there is a thief at this present minute travelling into London by any road, I'll lay a sovereign that within an hour he has discovered a bosom-friend whom he never saw or heard of before in his life; that they will sup together and lodge together to-night, and lay their plans for committing a burglary all before they sleep. It is the same with needy people, with adventurers, with swindlers. It is only the honest folk, it seems to me, who never recognise each other.'

Having uttered which truism Mr. Doyle said good-afternoon, and passed out of the bank, leaving as usual golden opinions behind him.

'What an extraordinary man he is!' thought the chief clerk. 'He knows everything.'

Which, after all, was not so remarkable a fact as Mr. Fletcher seemed to imagine. When day after day a man goes about the City gleaning for news, it would be strange, indeed, if he failed to gather together some sheaves.

From Meakins' bank to Bow is a long walk; but Mr. Doyle did not seek any conveyance to transport him thither. He was fond of exercise, and would have liked

more than he had time to take; for that tendency to grow fat, which has been already mentioned, caused him, occasionally, some uneasiness. Moreover, he knew, by experience, that a man can think twice as much when he is walking alone as when he is sitting alone; and he had a good deal to think out and arrange as he plodded through Mile-end, and over Globe Bridge, and so on to one of the old red-brick houses standing near the church.

Judging from externals, no human being would have supposed that house was the residence of a wealthy man. For outlook, it had in front all the traffic, and din, and dirt, and misery of that great East-end thoroughfare; the south-west wind bore to it the villanous smells and sulphurous vapours of Bow Common; at the back it had a distant view of the Hackney and Lea marshes, while to one side it was hemmed in by a manufactory, and on the other jostled by houses of about the same age and condition as itself. The brass knocker had been rubbed up to a state of brightness in which Mr. Doyle could see the reflection of his own nose and chin with exasperating fidelity; the step was of a snowy whiteness; the window-sills were clean as sills could be; the wire-gauze blinds that guarded the dining-room from vulgar gaze had not the suspicion of a rent in any of the tender fret-work. When the door was opened, the visitor found himself in a hall, where, though everything was old, all things were polished and bees-waxed to an extent which suggested that honest poverty felt determined to make the best of its surroundings, and that, though it could not afford to replace the worn floor-cloth or the threadbare stair-carpeting, the clock-case and the hat-

stand should shine resplendent as a good deed in a wicked world.

There was a smell of dinner, however, in the house, which somewhat negatived the idea of short means conveyed by the appearance of the furniture. It seemed savoury when wafted to the nostrils of a man who had eaten nothing since breakfast; but he knew enough of the ways of the establishment to understand it was but the fragrance of a departed meal which hung about the hall.

Mr. Alty, like Mr. McCullagh, was partial to an early dinner, only he preferred the hour of three to that which found favour in the eyes of Robert's father. What the family doctor said to the mode of life Mr. Alty adopted, history telleth not; but one thing is certain, if any person now followed the same fashion, premature death would be prophesied as his fate.

Mr. Alty breakfasted—and breakfasted well—at nine. He then proceeded to the despatch of such business as required his attention, about twelve eating in some tavern a crust of bread and a piece of cheese, washed down by half a pint of his favourite ale. At three he returned to dinner, after which meal he drank punch, and slept till tea-time. At nine he supped; and then, a square decanter of whisky and a kettle of boiling water being again produced, he drank steadily on till half-past eleven, when he went to bed.

And to look at him any one might have imagined he was a strict teetotaller, who had never partaken of a good joint in his life. Sallow, thin, white-haired, slow of speech, apparently slow of thought, that man would have needed to be swift as a hare and cunning as a fox who, even at a quarter-past eleven o'clock at night, hoped to get the best of Mr. Alty in a bargain.

This was Mr. Doyle's capitalist, to whom the neat housemaid announced a visitor by first rapping gently at the dining-room, and then saying softly,

'Mr. Doyle, sir, if it is quite convenient for you to see him.'

'Mr. Doyle—ah!' said Mr. Alty, who had just mixed his first glass of punch. 'Show him in, Sarah, show him in at once.'

He might have sat for a picture of Benevolence as he turned smilingly towards his friend, with the bright firelight irradiating his serene face, and leaping about the walls, and throwing bright darts into the street, where the afternoon shadows were already darkening. He looked so kind and cordial, so thoroughly comfortable, so surrounded by life's comforts and the world's good cheer, that a simple guileless sort of person might have been seduced into asking him for the loan of five pounds, or the gift of a sovereign to help some poor widow in her extremity. His face was wreathed with smiles, his eyes actually twinkled with hospitality.

'I am delighted to see you, Doyle,' he said, as that gentleman was commencing some lame apology for intruding upon Mr. Alty's dinner-hour. 'Pull up your chair; touch the bell, if you do not mind, and Sarah shall bring another tumbler.'

'Not for me, thank you,' answered Mr. Doyle.

'Since when have you become a total abstainer?' asked Mr. Alty, surprised.

'Since no time,' was the reply; 'but I dare not drink when I am fasting, and I have had nothing to-day except my breakfast.'

'Well, that is an omission you can surely supply now,' said his genial friend. 'There is something in the larder off which you will be able to make a meal, I'll go bound. There is a piece of

capital corned beef in cut, I know. We had a pheasant to-day for dinner, but I am afraid to offer you any of that: first, because there was very little left; and second, because it would be in that worst of states—between hot and cold.'

'No, I would rather try the corned beef, thank you,' Mr. Doyle declared. He understood well enough that Mr. Alty wanted to pick the pheasant's remaining bones for supper. 'There is one great merit about your house,' he went on, spicing his speech with a pleasant flattery,—'a person may be sure whatever you offer him to eat or to drink is of the best possible quality.'

'I endeavour to have such the case,' said Mr. Alty, assuming no airs of modest self-depreciation, but, on the contrary, answering Mr. Doyle's remark with the most serious gravity; 'for I hold,' he proceeded, crossing his legs and sipping his punch in a manner suggestive of the keenest enjoyment, '*that no money which a man spends upon himself is wasted*. Do not look so surprised at my statement, but hear me to the end. Good food and good liquor—you will admit they are not wasted; suitable clothing, warm in winter, cool in summer—that is not a superfluity either. A liberal expenditure of fuel indoors I suppose you will admit to be merely prudent; and the use of omnibuses and even cabs, when proceeding on any necessary business, is not to be gainsaid in order to save fatigue and avoid exposure to the weather. It is the moment a man begins to spend for others that he begins to go wrong.'

'I have followed you so far with interest,' remarked Mr. Doyle, as his coadjutor paused in his pompous periods and took a pinch of snuff. 'I have no doubt I shall continue to listen with

interest to the end of your argument.'

'When a person buys new furniture, for instance,' proceeded Mr. Alty, 'he does not buy it for himself.'

'For whom then, in the name of Heaven?' asked Mr. Doyle.

'For his wife or his neighbours: to humour Mrs. Green in the next street, or excite the envy of Mrs. Brown over the way. I have been thinking the whole question out to-day, and decided that the moment when a man forgets himself and commences to think of others is the moment when he takes his first step towards ruin. First he refurnishes, then he starts a trap, then he removes to a new neighbourhood, then he begins to give parties, then he neglects his business, then he finds his way to Whitecross-street, and then,' concluded Mr. Alty, finishing the contents of his tumbler at one gulp, 'he goes to the *deuce*.'

'I never looked at the matter before from your point of view,' said Mr. Doyle; 'but I daresay you are quite right. Where I suppose most men would find the bother is the exact point where self ceases to be considered and some one else comes forward demanding attention.'

'Yet it is as simple as A B C,' suggested Mr. Alty.

'I see it is, as you put it,' answered Mr. Doyle dryly. 'The whole idea is new to me; but I admit it is worthy of the most careful consideration.'

'You will find it so, if you want to make money, or keep money when you have made it. And now what is it, if I may ask, brought you here this afternoon? I know you did not come solely for the purpose of solacing a poor invalid.'

'An invalid? Have you been ill, then?'

'Very ill. Caliban never was

plagued with fiercer aches and pains. Stitches, cramps, and the devil knows what besides, have been racking my poor body. I am better; but if I had followed the doctor's advice I should not have been sitting opposite to you now.

"Eat what you like," he said, "but drink easy." For two days I tried his prescription. On the evening of the third I asked for a looking-glass. I just took one glance at my face. "Bring me up a bottle of the old port," I called to my sister, as well as I was able.

"But, my dear Jacob—" she remonstrated. "Bring me the port!" I shouted; and she did. I finished it before I went to sleep, and I verily believe they all expected to find me dead in my bed next morning. However, instead of that I got up, and crawled down into this room before the doctor called. "Ah, you are better," he said; and then he felt my pulse.

"A great deal better. We cannot improve upon the treatment, I think." "I think not," I answered. "You are making a wonderful recovery," he said. "Yes, I feel I am," was my reply; but I did not tell him a word about the wine, or he might have cut off the medicine. "You might have a little weak sherry-and-water to-day," he said, "with your sole, if you fancy it." I told him I did not care for sherry-and-water. "Perhaps you are just as well without any stimulant for the present;" and then he went.

'Why did you not write to me?' asked Mr. Doyle; 'or get some one else to write to me? I would have come over at once.'

'I can't bear making a fuss about illness. It seems to bring—you know what I mean.'

Mr. Doyle nodded.

Like the devils, there are times when even men like Mr. Alty believe and tremble.

'Still, I wish I had known,' said the junior in sin as well as in age. 'You must have wanted a person to talk to.'

'I did indeed. If it had not been for books, I don't know what I should have done.'

Marvellous contradiction! this creature read! He had Shakespeare at his fingers' ends; on his shelves were tomes for which collectors would have given fabulous prices. He was an antiquarian and a lover of all the side-paths along which may be gathered those flowers which redeem and beautify the arid tale of English history.

Mr. Doyle looked at him, and considered that better were the many children at Enfield Highway, and the wife who sometimes was not so pleasant as she might have been, than the dreary household at Bow, where this old man lived but for himself and to add thousand to thousand, not knowing who might gather.

By this time he had finished a moderate meal of beef and bread, and, declining to partake of a jam-tart hospitably sent in by Miss Alty, was mixing himself a small modicum of whisky and cold water when his host spoke again:

'But after all, Doyle, you have not told me what brought you here this afternoon.'

'I want you to lend me four thousand pounds for a month.'

'Of course; but what do you want it for?'

'A speculation which may, or may not, turn out well.'

'Can't I go into it with you?'

'I think not. You might not like it.'

'O, if the matter is a secret—' began Mr. Alty.

'There is no secret about it,' said Mr. Doyle. 'Only, as I have made up my mind to go in-

to the matter whether you like the affair or not, I don't want to waste time in useless argument.'

'All right; you shall have the four thousand whether I take any part of the risk or not. Now what is the venture?'

Ere he replied, Mr. Doyle pushed his chair closer to Mr. Alty, and replenished his glass.

CHAPTER XI.

HOPE IS EXCHANGED FOR CERTAINTY.

ENGAGED next morning in shaving (an operation he performed with religious punctuality) Robert McCullagh heard the postman's knock, and, razor suspended, paused in an agony of expectation to listen if the missive was for him.

His suspense was not of long continuance. Another moment and he heard the poor little drudge-of-all-work running up the stairs, then a letter was thrust under the door. Spite of Robert's superior predilections there was not much of the ceremony of service, and of handing about of cards and notes on salvers in that house.

Almost before it left the girl's fingers Robert had seized the envelope. It was blue. It was not directed in any hand he knew: it must be from Mr. Doyle. His excitement was so great he had to pause before examining its contents. Suppose the envelope contained a refusal? He thought the time which had elapsed too short for any good result to have been arrived at. He felt afraid to open the letter; he laid it on the table, and looked at it as if he feared a snake might be lying in wait amongst its folds.

Suppose Mr. Doyle had decided to say no? Robert McCullagh's

hand shook so much, he could not have finished shaving at that moment if the whole seven thousand pounds had been his for doing so.

All at once he made a dash at the envelope, and tore it open; his eyes danced over the enclosure: 'Seen my friend—certain conditions—am willing to meet your views—call upon me after four o'clock to-morrow.'

The young man sat down; he could not see to read every word in the short letter then.

Thankfulness, triumph, a sense of unreality, a disbelief which failed to accept the evidence even of his own senses, a mad delight which threatened to choke him—these and fifty other feelings strove together in Robert's breast as he said, almost aloud,

'So after all I shall be a partner in Pousnetts'!

When he was more composed he took up Mr. Doyle's note again, and read it carefully through.

Yes, there could be no mistake about the matter. His hopes were not deceiving him: under certain conditions Mr. Doyle would find the money; and Robert failed to imagine the conditions to which he should demur. What a difference twenty-four hours had made in his prospects! Yesterday morning at the same hour he had been depressed, miserable, peevish, despondent. Now he seemed to tread on air; in all his sky there was not a cloud. The finest of fine weather prevailed; if it had been raining cats, dogs, and broken bottles, Robert would still have deemed the day delightful.

And, mingling with the thought of that impending partnership, another vision arose, smiling, before his mind's eye. That girl he had seen in North-street! He must find out who she was and

where she lived—he could not rest till he knew more about her. All things seemed possible to him at that moment—love, position, wealth, happiness. The stream of his life was running fast and free that morning, making melody as it went; and the song it sung, the words it went along singing, were all about success and beauty, pink cheeks and sunny brown hair, and vessels bearing costly freights from the other side of the world for the benefit of Robert McCullagh junior.

He had never shaved himself so badly. Neither in Mrs. Mostin's long experience of him had he ever looked so well as when he entered the common sitting-room that morning.

'Why, Robert,' she cried, 'what is come to you?'

'How do you mean?' he asked.

'Why, you look as gay as a lark, and as blithe as a linnet! Have you had good news?'

'I have had news I hope will prove good,' he answered, with a little reticence. He was afraid of speaking of his probable fortune lest it should fade away like precious stones in the old fairy-tales.

The lady eyed him a little curiously; but she was one of those few wise women who understood the virtue of silence, therefore she only said heartily, 'I am sure I hope it will,' and made breakfast without further comment.

Before he went to business, Robert gave the poor little drudge half-a-crown. His was not a nature to keep all the sunshine that fell across its path strictly for its own benefit. The young man had ever been prone to make presents. From the day he left his father's roof his lot was cast amongst people who, receiving freely, gave lavishly; and thus both example and temperament

induced what many people would have called an excess of generosity, which failing indicated the fact that young McCullagh lacked one essential element of success. Men who triumphantly climb the ladder leading to wealth and consideration are never liberal out of what the poor call 'a good heart.' They may give upon a system; they may, and they often do, lay aside a tenth to be rendered as a thank-offering to the Lord in a manner which shall return a capital percentage to themselves; but of that quick eager charity which arises out of the delight of sharing prosperity with some miserable creature sunk in the depths of adversity, they have not the faintest appreciation, holding it, indeed, in the supremest contempt.

Taking Mr. Alty and Mr. Pousnett as fair specimens of the extremes of our representative commercial men, it may truthfully be said they would both have looked upon Robert McCullagh as an amiable lunatic for giving half-a-crown to a poor little drudge—the one, because he would not have given that sum to any person; the other, because he kept his two-and-sixpences for those who could touch their hats at his approach, and show the world what manner of man this Mr. Pousnett was, who walked the City streets a prince amongst merchants, a power upon 'Change.

That day McCullagh junior said nothing to his employer of the good fortune impending; but Mr. Pousnett, furtively regarding his manager when they came in contact, knew Robert's hopes were great.

Long previously he had read the young man quite through. There was no page in the book of that shallow nature with the contents of which he was unacquainted.

'He believes he will get the money,' decided Mr. Pousnett. 'Well, we shall see.'

Meanwhile, true to his promise, Robert despatched a note to his cousin, saying he had heard from Mr. Doyle, and was to see that gentleman in the course of the afternoon. He did not feel sorry to recollect the shortness of Mr. Doyle's notice left no time for consultation with the sage of North-street. Robert had no fondness for advice when it ran contrary to his own inclinations. Like the rest of the world, he had no objection to being helped along the road he preferred, but he did not like being recommended to abandon it altogether.

For good or for evil, he had decided to become a partner in Pousnetts' house if he could anyhow manage to do so; and he did not want to hear any more unpleasant remarks or listen to absurd warnings on the subject.

The ball was at his feet; if he allowed the opportunity to slip, he might remain a drudge, and a poor drudge, all his life. Naturally Alf Mostin—who was notorious for never keeping a promise where paying money chanced to be concerned, whose name on a bill as acceptor could not be regarded as other than a mere waste of paper and stamp, who had never been known to attend to an appointment, who muddled away hundreds of pounds, who was a disgrace in the matter of dress, who mismanaged every chance Fortune threw across his path—felt alarmed at the idea of a man, who had a great deal to lose, hampering his future with seven thousand pounds borrowed from a usurer. Alf knew it would be impossible for Robert to slip out of his responsibilities. He was aware if his cousin failed to meet his engagements, not merely great

scandal, but total ruin, must ensue. Mr. Pousnett's manager looked quite tolerantly at Alf's view of the matter, because, as he decided, his cousin took the wrong view so far as the future partnership was concerned. Mr. McCullagh junior felt quite satisfied that whatever liabilities he incurred he would discharge. In all his life he had never owed a man a penny he could not, and did not, pay. He knew the position of Pousnetts' house, and believed his share of the profits would amount to something over fifteen hundred a year at least. Well, he could, and he would, live on two hundred. He had no doubt at all about being able to repay the whole amount in a very short time. He would devote himself to business even more than he had done; no opportunity should slip past the house without at least an effort on his part to seize and improve it. He knew many ways in which the firm could save. Hitherto, it had not been his place to speak of such matters, but when he was one of that charmed circle everything would be different.

It was nearly five o'clock before he found himself in Bush-lane. The day had been an exceptionally busy one, and even at that advanced hour he met with some difficulty in leaving the warehouse.

When he reached Mr. Doyle's office he found a clerk mounting guard in the outer room: a very respectable and well-behaved young man, who had the sleekest of sleek black hair; a most composed demeanour; a quiet gentle voice; an expression as if, since he was short coated, he had never thought of such a thing as a will of his own; and an air of subdued deference which recommended him both to his employer and his employer's many visitors.

He was dressed in shabby but well-brushed black; snowy linen; the tie of his cravat was neatness itself. He wore for watchchain a very slight thread of gold manufactured in what used to be called the Venetian pattern. He looked poor, but like one who had known better times, and might see greater prosperity in the future.

'I like that young fellow of yours,' said Mr. Alty to Mr. Doyle one day. 'Knows his place.'

'He has not much brains,' answered Mr. Doyle; 'but he does his best, and he is useful. He is a good sort of machine.'

'You don't want too much brains in a clerk,' remarked Mr. Alty oracularly.

'No, I don't,' agreed Mr. Doyle. 'Still, I should like some.'

It was the young fellow his employer considered deficient in this respect who asked Robert his name.

'McCullagh,' was the reply. 'I am here by appointment.'

Next moment he found himself in the presence chamber.

'You received my letter, I suppose,' suggested Mr. Doyle blandly.

'Yes. I am sorry I could not get here sooner. I had a great deal to do to-day.'

'I said after four if you recollect,' observed Mr. Doyle, in bland reminder, 'and therefore you are quite in time. Well, now as to your matter. I have seen my friend, and he is willing on my recommendation to go into the matter. As to terms, our idea is ten per cent interest, and that some portion of the principal shall be paid off each year. We should like the amount to be reduced, say, at the rate of five hundred per annum; but we don't make a point of this. For the first six months this part of the affair can remain in abeyance. Though you

did not think of giving your father any percentage, I hope you consider that as strangers we are reasonable in our propositions.'

'Most reasonable,' agreed Robert.

'I am glad of that,' said Mr. Doyle, with a slight inclination of his head. 'As we are disposed to meet your wishes and consider your convenience, it is satisfactory to find our motives appreciated. To revert to business, however. On the first of January and of July in each year we shall require your promissory note for the amount of principal due and the interest for six months. It will also be necessary for you to insure your life, and assign the policy for this debt. You have no objection to doing that, I suppose?'

'Not the least,' answered Robert readily.

'My friend makes it a *sine quâ non* that Mr. Pousnett is put in possession of all the facts of the case.'

'I have no objection to his knowing everything,' said young McCullagh.

'And that I see him personally on the subject,' went on Mr. Doyle, as though his visitor had not spoken.

'I shall be very glad, indeed, for you to do so.'

'You see it is a large sum, and we should like to know exactly what we are doing, and whether we stand on firm ground or not,' explained Mr. Doyle.

'I scarcely understand what you mean by that,' said Robert; 'but it is only reasonable you should wish to satisfy yourselves, and I do not want to keep any secrets from Mr. Pousnett.'

'Then will you arrange for me to see him?' asked Mr. Doyle.

'Certainly. Will you excuse my asking you one question?'

'A dozen, if you like,' was the ready answer; but had Alf Mostin been there he would have seen Mr. Doyle instantly put on defensive armour, a shirt of mail under his frank and easy manner.

'Thank you, but I only want to say one thing. When—or perhaps I ought rather to use the word if—this partnership is arranged—'

'Yes,' observed Mr. Doyle, to show he was attending to his visitor's hesitating utterances and kindly wished to encourage him.

'You will not expect Mr. Pousnett to take bills for the amount? He was willing to do so in my father's case; but I should be afraid—'

'You need not be afraid,' interrupted Mr. Doyle. 'We take paper here; but we do not give it. No; whenever the matter is properly settled, the money shall be forthcoming.'

'I hope you forgive my plain speaking?' said Robert, immensely relieved.

'There is nothing like a plain understanding about every affair in life,' answered Mr. Doyle. 'And, to show you I act up to my profession, I will now tell you that if, to quote your own expression, this partnership becomes *un fait accompli*, you will find you have bound yourself to a very heavy thing. Because, mind you, we shall expect to be paid, and to be paid first. So long as you deal fairly and honestly by us, we shall consider your convenience, so far as is possible, with a due regard to our own interests; but we should not feel disposed to wait long out in the cold if we saw you launching into extravagances or neglecting our payments.'

'You will not find me doing either one thing or the other,' Robert replied.

'I hope we shall not; but you will be placed in a difficult position, more especially as I must bind you not to mention how you are situated to any one except Mr. Pousnett and your cousin. It would not answer our purpose for the world to know we had done a thing of the sort. It is quite out of our line. If Pousnetts had not stood as they do, nothing on earth would have induced me to advise my friend to entertain the idea even for a moment.'

'For my own sake, independent of you altogether, I should observe secrecy about the matter,' said Robert. 'Life might become inexpressibly disagreeable to me if my father knew I was borrowing money from a stranger.'

'Ay, and *such* a stranger,' capped Mr. Doyle, hammering in the nail Robert had struck so feebly. 'As you know—for your cousin told you the truth, no doubt—we are money-lenders here, pure and simple—money-lenders who, as a rule, ask a long percentage, and get it too; who have kept many a man's head above water when he must otherwise have sunk; but who are thought none the better of in the commercial world for that. Make no mistake about the sort of persons you are dealing with, and talk as little as may be about me and my office in Bush-lane. In fact, were I you, I should not come here again at all. Mr. Mostin could transact everything there is to be done. You can trust him, I suppose?'

'O yes, I can trust Alf.'

'Yes, I fancy he is to be trusted, except in that little trifling matter of never meeting a bill nor paying a debt. I will call on Mr. Pousnett any day and hour he may appoint. And now, Mr. McCulagh, since we have, I believe, said all there is to say, the sooner

you go the better I shall be pleased, as I have still some letters to write before post.'

CHAPTER XII.

ALL ABOUT HER.

'So you would not take warning; you have put your head into the lion's mouth.'

It was Mr. Alf Mostin who spoke—Mr. Mostin, not engaged on this occasion in frying bacon and preparing coffee, but employed in the, to him, far more congenial task of mixing punch.

A week had passed since Robert's interview with Mr. Doyle. The remains of a modest supper, provided at his cousin's expense, were still on the table; but Alf had drawn a small stand close up to the fire, and, with all the materials for what he called 'spending an innocent evening' within reach, invited Robert to draw forward his chair and enjoy himself.

'Your father can get no better whisky than that,' he remarked, pushing a brimming tumbler to his visitor, and noticing as he did so the cloud his former speech had brought over Robert's face.

'Possibly,' was the somewhat sulky answer; 'but he would not pay as much for it.'

'I paid nothing for it,' answered Mr. Mostin. 'You can't buy what your father calls "a guid sperrit" at a much cheaper rate.'

'You will have to pay for it, though, I suppose,' retorted Robert.

'No, I sha'n't,' replied his cousin. 'Two gallons were sent to me yesterday as a present.'

'You seem to have got in luck's way.'

'So far as eight quarts of whisky are concerned, I have.'

'How long will eight quarts of whisky last you, Alf?'

'That entirely depends upon the number of friends who come and help me drink them; also on whether I give a few bottles away; also whether I offer any of the precious fluid as an oblation on the altar of self-interest. Doyle might be propitiated with half a gallon.'

'He might, as he says he never can get any money of you.'

'A mere figure of speech,' retorted Mr. Mostin. 'Did he use it in the course of friendly conversation with you?'

'He said something of the sort, but I was too much occupied with my own affairs at the time to pay much attention to his remark; and I might have forgotten it altogether if he had not repeated the statement to Mr. Pousnett, who mentioned it to me.'

'And if it is a fair question, how did my good name happen to form the subject of conversation between your great chief and my little Shylock?'

'Simply enough. Mr. Pousnett wished to know something about the gentleman through whose introduction I had been fortunate enough to make Mr. Doyle's acquaintance.'

'And then Shylock launched out into eulogiums upon his favourite client.'

'So far as I can understand, he did nothing of the sort,' answered Robert quickly. 'He said you were a splendid hand at borrowing, but slower than any tortoise about repaying.'

'*Et tu, Brute!*' exclaimed Mr. Mostin sadly; 'and thou, my Shylock—to whom I have taken the rare sovereign and the hardly-earned shilling; to whom I have introduced men harder up even than myself—men willing to pay any interest under heaven for the

sake of a few pounds slowly doled out by those unwilling hands. But 'twas ever thus. Pray proceed, Robert. Had these two righteous men any further fault to find with your obedient servant?'

'Mr. Pousnett had no fault to find with you whatever. On the contrary, it seems he was rather captivated by Mr. Doyle's description of you, although that gentleman went on to say you knew neither how to get up in the morning, nor how to get to bed at night.'

'Really! His acquaintance with my little weaknesses does him infinite credit. How did Shylock guess my infirmities? Can I ever, in an access of misplaced friendship, have taken him into my confidence?'

'You ought to be able to tell that better than I,' answered Robert; 'all I know is he described your habits more accurately than I could have done. More—he said you were a man of parts, who would never achieve any good thing either for yourself or anybody else; that you had plenty of brains, which you could not or would not make use of; that if your own father were alive you would ruin him with the best intentions; that if a bill-stamp were put into your hands you would do yourself some mischief within five minutes; and that, speaking broadly, you were going to the deuce as fast as a man with a dozen irons in the fire, not one of which could ever by possibility get hot, can go.'

'And to all this sack was not there even a mite of bread?' asked Alf Mostin plaintively. 'Had Shylock not one good word to say of the impecunious wretch he has helped to ruin? Stay, I must be just. Doyle, after all, has only helped me to ruin myself.'

There was something in the tone

in which Alf Mostin spoke the last few words that arrested his cousin's attention, for before answering he turned and looked sharply at his companion.

'Surely, Alf,' he exclaimed, 'it is optional with a man whether he ruins himself or not!'

'Quite. O, of course, quite optional! Circumstances, associations, temperament, the tricks of that jade Fortune, have nothing whatever to do with the matter. But to revert to our Doyle: could he not find one word to speak on my behalf?'

'He found several,' replied Robert, reddening, and trying to cover his embarrassment with an affectation of easy indifference which aroused Mr. Mostin's curiosity.

'For instance—' suggested his cousin.

'He said you were very clever, —twice, three times over as clever as I am,' added young McCullagh, with a forced laugh; 'that you wrote a beautiful hand; that you were quick at figures except where your own affairs were concerned, when you made extraordinary errors; that you would attend carefully to any one's business but your own; that, if you could be induced to pay a little more attention to your personal appearance, you would, in a confidential capacity, be invaluable to any house; that though you never met your engagements, nor thought of meeting them, you could be trusted with untold gold; that, spite of the fact of your reformation being hopeless, he liked you better than many a better man; that in effect, in a way, there was no person he liked so much as impetuous, unstable, impetuous Alfred Mostin.'

The gentleman thus eulogised lifted the poker and broke a lump of coal; and, as he did so, the

leaping blaze revealed a grave and thoughtful face.

'We have heard,' he remarked, 'of the devil fiddling and of the devil dancing; but I can't recall ever hearing of him in the character of a draughtsman. Just to give him his due, I think he has now produced a very fair sketch of me. It is not often a fellow recognises his own likeness. Does not the Bible say a man looks in the glass, and straightway goes away and forgets what manner of man he is? From birth to death I fancy many have not the faintest idea of what they are morally and mentally. I am sure I did not exactly realise "myself" till Mr. Doyle turned his lantern upon my shortcomings.'

'I think he spoke very fairly, Alf,' said his cousin.

'O, you do, do you?' commented Alf.

'Yes, I do. When Mr. Pousnett asked me about you afterwards, I was obliged to admit the truth of most of Mr. Doyle's assertions.'

'You were, were you?'

'When he put the question to me straightforwardly, what could I say?'

'It does not much matter to me what you said,' answered Mr. Mostin shortly. 'Mix,' he added impatiently, pushing over the decanter; then seizing it himself, he remarked, 'Why, man, you have not drunk a drop of your punch! What ails you? What has ailed you ever since you came in?'

'Nothing ails me,' answered Mr. Robert McCullagh, applying himself to his neglected tumbler. 'You are not vexed, are you, Alf, at what I have just told you?'

'Vexed,' repeated his cousin; 'quite the contrary. Rather gratified; delighted to find myself, all of a sudden, a person of such con-

sequence that a great man like Mr. Pousnett condescends to interest himself about my shortcomings ; and, by the bye,' he went on suddenly, setting down his glass and turning so as to command a full view of his visitor's face, 'will you tell me how it came to pass Doyle was so communicative? I have known him this many a year, yet he is the last man it ever occurred to me to suspect of the vice of gossiping for gossip's sake.'

'Mr. Pousnett, as I have told you, asked him about you.'

'But why did he ask him about me? Of what earthly interest could I or my affairs be to your chief?'

'Well, the fact is—'

'O, something does lie behind, then!'

'Mr. Pousnett, hearing I had been introduced to Mr. Doyle by you—'

'Thought I might be even such another paragon as yourself, eh, Bob?'

'Being relations, he perhaps imagined we might be like each other,' amended his cousin.

'A delusion which Mr. Doyle soon dispelled.'

'Whatever Mr. Doyle may have said, and I believe Mr. Pousnett repeated the gist of the conversation to me, did not produce an unfavourable impression.'

'How do you know that?'

'Because he still holds to the idea which prompted his questions.'

'He *had*, then, some underlying notion. I thought as much; and Alf Mostin smiled significantly in confidence to the fire.

'He said to Mr. Doyle, so far as I understand matters: "Once this partnership is arranged we shall require another manager—not exactly in Mr. McCullagh's place, because we do not propose that another man shall step into

such large shoes; but still a manager. Do you know of any one you think would suit?"'

'And straightway Mr. Doyle said, "If you can induce Alf Mostin to take the berth, you may go to the Mediterranean, or Ceylon, or Terra del Fuego, with an easy mind. He will keep things together for you; he will steer the Pousnett craft off all dangerous coasts; enable her to weather any storm she may be called upon to encounter, and bring her safe into port laden with goodly merchandise, which he will dispose of to great advantage, and by first post remit the proceeds to your order, O mighty king!"'

'He said nothing of the sort,' retorted Robert testily. 'I have already told you the way he summed up your merits and demerits. He assured Mr. Pousnett you were the last man it would, with your present habits, be safe to place in a position of trust; for, although you were perfectly honest as regarded hard cash, you were not to be relied upon in the matter of time; that, in fact, you had no idea of time; that if you made an appointment for eleven, you kept it about four, or possibly not at all.'

'Now I wonder who he thinks would be likely to keep an appointment with him?' soliloquised Mr. Mostin.

'If he would only come to me when he ought to do, I should not say a word,' Mr. Doyle went on, Mr. Pousnett told me, almost with tears in his eyes; 'for I have a sincere liking for the young man, and want to help him to get out of my hands.'

'I daresay,' interpolated Alf gloomily.

'But for weeks and months together I not only do not see his money, but I do not see him.' Mr. Pousnett was quite

pleased with the manner in which Mr. Doyle spoke. "There must be something very exceptional about your cousin," he remarked, "for him to have gained such a hold over a person like Mr. Doyle."

'Go on,' entreated Mr. Mostin; 'the play begins to thicken.'

'So far from Mr. Doyle's plain speaking (and it seems to me he spoke very plainly) prejudicing Mr. Pousnett against you, whatever he said appears to have produced a precisely contrary effect. Mr. Pousnett, directly he had left, called me into his room, and, after just mentioning that everything was satisfactorily arranged, and that, as soon as the lawyers had done their part, I should become one of the firm, plunged into the matter about you. "I am quite sure," he said, "Mr. Mostin would suit us; and, of course, I would rather have some one belonging to you in the office than a stranger."'

'And you?' asked Mr. Mostin quietly.

'Well, Alf, what could I say? No cousin ever was fonder of another than I am of you; it would be strange if I were not. But I *don't* think you would be in your sphere at Pousnetts', and I could not say I thought you would. Could I?'

'Certainly not,' agreed Alf Mostin. 'Truth before everything!'

'Mr. Pousnett would have a direct reply. He repeated to me what Mr. Doyle had told him, and then asked my opinion point-blank. When I had given it, he cross-examined me as to the why and the wherefore; and then, when he had quite finished, before in fact he dismissed me—'

'I am waiting the end of your sentence,' observed Mr. Mostin as his cousin paused.

'He said he should like to see you,' Robert hurried on; 'that he believed you and he would get on capitally together; that he had an aptitude for making useful goods out of unlikely raw material; that he felt sure, from what Mr. Doyle had hinted and I had confessed, you would be the right man in the right place if he could induce you—that was his word, Alf—induce you to accept the post which would soon be vacant in the office.'

'He did not say anything else, did he?' asked Mr. Mostin.

'Of what sort? I scarcely understand you.'

'He did not say, for example, that your description of your father had proved so far inaccurate, he thought he should like to judge for himself whether you and Mr. Doyle had done strict justice to *me*.'

For a moment Robert McCullagh hung his head. If Mr. Pousnett had not, in so many words, said he doubted the truth of Mr. Doyle's statements, duly confirmed by his manager, his manner implied that he felt far from satisfied.

'People see with different eyes,' he remarked suavely. 'I should like to talk to your cousin myself.'

Robert did not think it necessary to repeat this sentence; but Mr. Mostin knew very well it, or something very similar, had been uttered.

'I'll go and see your governor with pleasure, Bob,' he remarked, after a pause, during which he had waited in vain for an answer. 'I am quite sure he wants me to call. Shall I make an appointment or take my chance?'

'You would never think, Alf, surely of taking a situation in Pousnetts'!' exclaimed Robert, aghast.

'What, the future partner objects, does he?' conjectured Mr. Mostin, laughing. 'You don't want a poor devil like me in the office to stand between your worshipful self and the wind of your nobility. Make your mind quite easy, old chap. The salary could not be named which should induce me to take a berth in Pousnetts' house with you as one of the firm. For the rest, should Truth and I ever have to try a wrestle over your perfections, I think I shall do my best to pitch her over before I am so candid about your shortcomings as you confess to have been about mine.'

'I assure you, Alf—'

'It is no use, Bob; your own mouth has damned you; I see now what the future partner will be. God grant his pride may not meet with any very grievous fall! Just for to-night, however, we will forget all that. Mix, mix, mix! If any amount of liquor can make you genial, drink! I vow and protest I think your father would, under the influence of this splendid spirit, form a more lively companion than his son.'

'You are most unreasonable, Alf,' expostulated Robert; 'you take offence when none was intended—you screw secrets out of me, and then are angry because I can't tie people's tongues.'

'Nor your own.'

'I did not say a word except what Mr. Pousnett wrung from me.'

'I feel I am contracting quite an affection for Mr. Pousnett,' said Mr. Mostin, with forced enthusiasm. 'Upon second thoughts, my dear cousin, I shall not leave this matter in your hands; I shall appoint a time and place for the momentous interview myself.'

'When it comes off, I hope you will allow me to lend or buy you some new clothes.'

'Why?'

'Because you have not the faintest idea of the effect your usual habiliments might produce.'

'Have you?'

'Yes, indeed, Alf; I know how much externals are considered in our office. Why, the youngest clerk there—'

'Dresses better than I do,' finished Mr. Mostin, as his cousin paused.

'I did not mean to wound you; but such is indeed the fact,' said Mr. Robert McCullagh, with smug self-complacency.

'It will take down their self-esteem a peg then, perhaps, for once to see a man who does not care the sixteenth part of a farthing for Pousnett, or his partners, or his clerks, or their clothes, or any single thing about the whole blessed concern,' answered Mr. Mostin, using the word blessed in a manner which indicated that it was employed quite in a satirical sense.

'You *are* angry, Alf,' exclaimed his cousin, looking at him in surprised alarm.

Mr. Mostin burst out laughing, lifted the poker again, hammered another lump of coal, threw down the blackened and misshapen piece of iron, drained his tumbler, and then, jumping up, walked about the room for a few moments, remarking good-humouredly,

'Well, perhaps I was, Bob; you see, you are such a snob! And he laughed again, but whether at his own thoughts or the disgusted expression on Robert's face, who could say?

'What a lot of bosh we have been talking!' he declared, as he resumed his chair, and laid his hand once again on the too convenient decanter. 'Spoiling our evening, getting very near to quarrelling, putting an affront on prime liquor by discussing knaves

and swells over it! Here's good luck to you, Bob! May you soon have as many thousands as you have now hundreds a year, health to enjoy your fortune, and a pretty wife to—O, that reminds me!' he broke off suddenly. 'I've seen your young woman.'

'My young woman!' repeated Robert, in amazement. 'Do you mean Effie?'

'Effie—no!' was the scornful reply. 'You told me you would have nothing to do with her. I mean the vision of loveliness you told me you encountered one day in North-street.'

'Do you really mean that, Alf? You are not jesting now?'

'Jest! What should I jest about?' asked his cousin. 'Really, she is a very sweet parcel of goods, Master Bob.'

'I wish, Alf, you would not—'

'Wish I would not what? Wish I would not tell you who she is, where she lives, or her name?'

'You know nothing about her.'

'Don't I? That's all you know about me. I could impart some pieces of information you do not care to be told—give you her name; where she lives, which wouldn't interest you, of course; who she is, and the errand that brought her into North-street—but I will not. As you have chosen to be nasty to me, Master Bob, I will be nasty to you.'

'But, Alf, I was never nasty to you.'

'O, yes, you were; and your conscience tells you you were.'

'Should you like to be in Pousnetts' house?'

'No; not at all.'

'Well, then, I was *not* nasty to you.'

'Meaning that you want to know all about the young woman.'

'Meaning nothing; though I thought her the most beautiful

creature I ever saw in all my life.'

'Humph!' said Mr. Mostin dubiously. 'However, she is not amiss. I have met with worse-looking girls. She is natural and unaffected and pleasant in her manners; in which last respect, Robert, she differs from you. She will be twenty-one in May; she is very poor, and she lives with her mamma at Old Ford.'

'In the name of Heaven, Alf, how did you find out all this?'

'By using the brains Heaven gave me, Mr. McCullagh,' was the sedate reply.

'But how did you use them? By what accident were you able to ascertain—'

'It was not by an accident at all. An opportunity to learn something about the young lady came in my way, and I availed myself of it; why, I am sure I cannot tell, unless with some vague idea of pleasing you.'

'How good you always are to me, Alf!'

Mr. Mostin did not see fit to take any notice of this gush of feeling, so Robert proceeded diplomatically,

'You seem to have spoken to Miss—— What is her name?'

His cousin burst out laughing.

'You don't trap me that way, Bob,' he said. 'I will tell you all I know about her out of my own free will, but I am too old a bird to be caught unaware, specially by a fledgling like you. The young lady is a Miss Lilands; Christian name, Jane; her mamma calls you fair, Janey. Her papa was an admiral, who, when he died, left his widow and only child but scantily provided for.'

'Go on,' entreated Robert.

'Go on!' repeated Mr. Mostin. 'I am going on as fast as I can. Are you too impatient to let a fellow draw his breath? Besides,

there is very little more to tell. They come from some place in the North, and are only living in London till Mrs. Lilands has won a great lawsuit old Napier is fighting for her.'

'But how did you contrive to hear all this? How were you able to get introduced to them? I know you can always manage to do almost impossible things, but it does seem to me most extraordinary that you should become in a moment, as one may say, hand and glove with total strangers.'

'And pray who said I was hand and glove with them?' retorted Mr. Mostin. 'I am very sure I never did.'

'You have spoken to them; you know the ins and outs of their affairs.'

'Of course I have spoken to them, and of course I know something of their affairs; just as you might have done, if you had ever thought of getting off that high horse you are so fond of riding, and talking to poor devils who are forced to go afoot. There is a young fellow in Napier's office who seems to get whatever kicks may be going in that establishment; at least, he has apparently to be there first in the morning, and to stay the last at night. He and I pass the time of day sometimes, and occasionally I have given him an order for the theatre. Well, it so chanced that last Monday I saw your young woman coming out of Napier's, and got a good look at her. She is really not amiss. I had not time then to run her to earth; besides which I knew I could hear all about who she was, and the rest of it, from my friend. The same evening I ran against him just as he was locking up. "Are you going down North-street?" I asked. "No," he said, with a naughty

expression old Napier would have had many remarks to make concerning had he heard it. "I am going up North-street, and across the square, and along Worship-street, and so to that blank blanked Old Ford." "I'll go with you as far as Worship-street," I remarked. "Have a cigar?" So he had a cigar, and lit it—in fact, we both lit up; and when he began puffing in good earnest I remarked carelessly, "I saw a neat thing in petticoats leave your office to-day. Who is she?" "What sort of a thing?" he asked. "We have several things in petticoats, worse luck!" "Don't you like the ladies?" I suggested. "No, I can't bear them in business." This was exactly what that young Goth said. "Old or young, one woman can give more trouble than twenty men." I saw it was no use going on in this way, so I went straight to the point. "The woman I refer to is young, and I may say attractive. She wears a sweetly-becoming black-straw bonnet, a black-silk dress, and a black-velvet mantle, both rather shabby. She is pleasant and winsome-looking, she has brown hair, and a colour in her cheeks like delicate rose-leaves." "And she is the plague of our lives," interrupted Barnes—that is the name of the legal misogynist. "At least," he added, "her mother is. It is all on her account I have now to trail off to Old Ford, instead of going to my uncle's, where there is the jolliest party imaginable."

'Well?' asked Mr. McCullagh junior.

'Well, can't you guess the rest?'

'You went with this young man, I suppose—'

'Wrong, my son. I went in his place. I said, "I will take the deed, letter, parcel, or message. One way is as good to me

as another, for *I* am not bidden to any party; indeed, the way to Old Ford is better than any other." He hummed and hawed just a little, for old Napier is a hard old nail; but he knew me, and I promised to see him scot-free—to swear, if necessary, he had fallen down in a fit; and besides, he wanted to go to his uncle's, and he did not want to go to Old Ford.'

'At all events, you went to Old Ford.'

'How impatient you are!' laughed Alf Mostin. 'But you are right—I went to Old Ford. I generally take a stroll somewhere at night, and Old Ford and your young woman suggested two objects to my consideration. Good Heavens, what a hunt I had to find Acacia Cottage! However, at last, about half-past eight o' the clock, I did find it; a poor little place, with a garden in front surrounded by palings, and the *gate locked*; no bell, no means of attracting attention.'

'What did you do?' asked Robert, who certainly, in such case, would have retraced his steps.

'I got over the paling and knocked. The door was answered on the chain by the very smallest servant I ever saw in a cap and apron; and at the same moment I heard a shrill voice exclaim from the parlour, "You have forgotten to lock that padlock again, Ruth." In a breath Ruth answered she had not, and asked me, with a scared face, what I pleased to want. I said I had a letter from Mr. Napier. Having received which message, the small damsel shut the door in my face and retired. After a short pause she returned, and asked me for the letter. I declined to deliver it, except to Mrs. Lilands. The child closed the door again, and retired once more. After a still longer

pause, I heard a different footfall cross the hall, the chain was removed, the door opened quite wide; candle in hand, your fair scrutinised me doubtfully. "*Are you from Mr. Napier?*" she asked. "I have a letter from him," I said, removing my hat. "Miss Lilands, I presume." "Yes," she answered; "pray come in."

'It is a very poor house they occupy, Bob, very poorly furnished; and yet the moment I crossed the threshold I felt I had fallen amongst gentlefolk. She is simply charming. For aught she knew, I might have been the least-considered clerk in Napier's, hitherto hidden from her sight, yet her manner was perfection. "I am so sorry you should have been kept waiting," she said; "but mamma is not strong, and feels nervous about callers after dark." She would, in her infinite courtesy, have given place for me to enter the parlour first, but I gave her precedence. Before she took it, she turned and smiled pleasantly. "Mamma," she said, addressing a most gruesome-looking individual seated in the only arm-chair the room afforded, "this gentleman has come from Mr. Napier; you need not have been uneasy." "But what a time of night!" said the old lady. You won't find her a charming mother-in-law, Bob.'

'I wish you would not, Alf—'

'O, indeed! After taking all that trouble on your behalf!'

And Mr. Alf Mostin mixed for himself again, and after doing so looked straight into the fire.

'I wish you would go on with your narrative, Alf,' said Robert, after a pause.

'And a few minutes ago you wished I would not,' answered his cousin. 'If I go on with it,' he added, speaking very gravely, 'I shall have to say things you won't

like. They are people not in our groove. You know I hold with Stephenson that all men are alike ; or, at all events, many men might be alike if they pleased. But the same doctrine won't wash with women. Now these women—the one disagreeable, and the other agreeable—are quite unlike anything in our set.'

'Speak for yourself,' thought Mr. Robert McCullagh, mindful of Portman-square ; but he wisely refrained from speech.

'They are very poor ; but the mother, at any rate, is as proud as Lucifer, and I should say she would as soon think of her daughter marrying a sweep as either of us.'

'Either of us !' once again considered his cousin scornfully.

'From what Mrs. Lilands said,' went on Mr. Mostin, 'I gather that if they win their case—and I do not think old Napier would have taken it up hal the chances of success not been very good indeed—missy will be an heiress ; but whether she is poor or rich, I should not like to be the man who should ask Mrs. Lilands for her hand. I thought about it all sitting in that little room, while the mamma meandered on concerning the lawsuit, and said how slow Mr. Napier was, and how wearisome she found it having to do with a man who wanted facts repeated to him over and over and over again. "He seems to me to have no grasp of intellect," she observed at last, and then paused for a reply. "I have never spoken to Mr. Napier in my life," I answered. "What !" she exclaimed ; "and you in his employment !" "O no," I said ; "I am not in his employment, although I happen to bring a letter from him." "Not one of his clerks !" with increasing amazement. You know my principle, Bob, that I make it

a point of conscience never to tell a lie when truth will serve the purpose ; so I was at some trouble to explain I had offices in the same house, and as it was difficult for Mr. Napier's clerk to deliver the letter that evening, I had undertaken the duty of doing so. "I shall certainly write to Mr. Napier on the subject," said the old lady indignantly. "O mamma," cried her daughter, "when this gentleman has been so very kind as to take the trouble of coming all this way ?" I thanked Miss Lilands only by a look, for I wanted to answer her stern parent without delay. "I do not think you will, ma'am," I said : "in the first place, because I am sure it would be but a poor satisfaction to get a clerk into trouble ; and in the next, I have brought the package as quickly and safely as any one could. The young man to whose care it was intrusted wanted to go to a party at his uncle's, which would have been impossible had I not offered to be his deputy." "It was exceedingly good of you, I am sure," cried the young lady ; but Mrs. Lilands murmured a remark to the effect that "business was business." "And pleasure is pleasure," I ventured to add, at which obvious truism her daughter laughed pleasantly. "I assure you the clerk in question is not so overburdened with invitations, he can afford to decline the few which do come in his way," I went on. "So far as I can see, Mr. Napier keeps the noses of his employes pretty well to the grindstone."

'What a thing to say !' observed Robert, shocked.

'She did not seem to mind. She appears to me to care for nothing except what concerns the great suit. She said she did not desire to injure any one in a de-

pendent position, and that she would overlook the fault of which she still considered the young man had been guilty. "An important letter," she remarked, "ought to be delivered by an accredited agent. Mr. Napier also wishes a reply to be sent by his messenger. It is really very awkward." I told her I would take her reply safely, whether verbal or written. "But I shall have to detain you while I write," she said; and though, as a rule, I regretted my time was not valuable, I felt happy at last to be able to state the fact. "Can I answer Mr. Napier's letter for you, mamma?" asked her daughter, seeing her mother took not the smallest notice of my civil speech. "No, I must write myself;" and, having made this reply, she rose and left the room.

'And did Miss Lilands remain with you?'

'Miss Lilands remained with me. She said apologetically her mamma was so anxious about the lawsuit, she sometimes seemed a little irritable; but it was only manner. I declared I was quite sure of that. When one has to tell a fib, it is best to tell it heartily. "And it is trying," went on the girl wearily. "I often wish poor mamma had never thought it her duty to go to law. Mr. Napier does seem so slow." "Lawyers are proverbially slow," I answered; and then I ventured to ask if the stake at issue were large. "It seems large to us," she said—"forty or fifty thousand pounds, I believe. I suppose," she added wistfully, "Mr. Napier is very clever?" "I suppose so," I agreed. "At any rate, I have always heard him spoken of as very safe." "What do you mean by safe?" she asked. "That he is not speculative; that

he won't go into a thing he thinks doubtful." "Then he must be very sure of this." "There can be little doubt of that," I replied.

'We did not talk any more about Mr. Napier or the lawsuit; indeed, we had not long to talk on any subject; for Mrs. Lilands shortly afterwards appeared, bearing an envelope, which she delivered to me with great *empressment*. "I have no resource, sir, save to give you this trouble," she said. "I can only hope the next time Mr. Napier intrusts a message to his clerk, the young man may see fit to deliver it in person." I did not take any notice of this back-handed blow at what she evidently considered my officiousness, but assured her it had given me great pleasure to be of the slightest service; and added, "I only wish it might fall to my lot to bring you intelligence of the successful termination of your suit." "Thank you," she said stiffly; "but when that event happens, I should imagine Mr. Napier would bring me intelligence of it himself." Having dealt me which final slap in the face, she called Ruth to open the door and unlock the gate, and bowed me out with a look that implied, "I shall be very glad to see the last of you." Miss Lilands' smile, however, comforted me. Without the memory of it, I should have felt very small indeed as I trudged back to the City.'

'How I wish I had a little of your impudence!' said Robert reflectively, after a moment's silence.

Mr. Mostin looked at him with a comical expression, but made no reply. He had helped him to mount the ladder, and already he was experiencing the fate of those who stay below.

(To be continued.)



A STUDY IN YELLOW.

LONDON FAMILIES AND THEIR EDUCATION.

A Study in Hellows.

'No, my dear, the dress is *not* becoming; but then it has, so to speak, been hallowed by the associations of centuries.'

As Mrs. Vanderpont spoke, she turned with some difficulty upon her chair, readjusted her double eyeglass upon her autocratic-looking nose, and again carefully surveyed the dress in question. The dress was occupied—uncomfortably occupied—by a little boy about eleven years old. It certainly might have been, as Mrs. Vanderpont remarked, hallowed by the associations of centuries, and to any one with an idealistic cast of mind, and a turn for mediæval customs and costumes, would, no doubt, have proved interesting; but little boys of ten years old are not generally interested in these matters, and the long stiff cloth coat, gathered up in pleats round the waist, the leathern strap and buckle, the yellow breeches, the worsted stockings, the high-lows, and the starched muslin appendages, did no more, I am afraid, for the development of antiquarian tastes in Master Freddy Berlynvoole than they did for his comfort or personal appearance.

'He does not appear to me to be quite at his ease,' exclaimed the lady addressed, leaning forward for a closer inspection.

'O, he will get used to them. It is surprising how soon we manage to do without many of the appliances of modern civilisation.'

The converse of this proposition hardly held good in the case of

Mrs. Vanderpont—that is to say, if the present style of female dress is to be considered an appliance of modern civilisation. To the untrained eye Mrs. Vanderpont's figure—if it was her figure—appeared to be almost too well accentuated for a woman of—well, say twelve stone: ladies so seldom weigh any more.

'Do the clothes hurt you, Freddy?' asked the lady kindly, who had remarked doubtfully about his ease.

'Not much, mamma,' said Freddy stoutly. 'The coat daggles about my legs, and the shoes slip off, and the collar cuts me, and the breeches are hard, and my nose is always running; but the other boys say I shall soon get used to it.'

'Of course, of course,' said Mrs. Vanderpont, in a resigned tone. 'There is nothing in the world, Freddy, that we cannot get used to with patience and perseverance.'

'Well, you can get some luncheon, Freddy,' said his mamma.

Freddy slid off his chair, pulled it to the table, and devoted himself to the luncheon with the happy forgetfulness of hungry childhood with something nice to eat.

'Really, upon reflection, I am almost sorry I induced Edward to get the presentation. It was a most difficult matter. He looks awfully like a charity boy.'

'Hush, my dear! for Heaven's sake, be careful! Don't let such a remark as that reach the child's ears. It might lower his sense

of self-respect and ruin his future prospects. We *cannot* be too careful in our treatment of youth.'

And Mrs. Vanderpont, whose treatment of youth had been strictly confined to that of her own, and who had certainly done full justice to it, allowed herself to subside into her easy-chair with many a creak.

'You know,' went on Freddy's mamma, 'family expenses nowadays are something shocking. It is quite impossible to present a decent exterior to the world, without the most anxious supervision and management, upon anything like the amount of Edward's income. What with the girls, who *must* be dressed, and whose music and singing *cannot* be neglected, and the two eldest boys, who, of course, have no reasonable chance of success in life unless the foundation is laid at a school whose associations are unexceptionable—really, one's life at times becomes almost a burden. Of course great sacrifices must be made for one's children, and Edward and myself are quite prepared to make them, and *do* make them. He has given up his club, and I have given Hannah notice, and am having my own dresses made—it is out of the question with the girls—at Mapleson's instead of Madame Fenelotte's, and yet we don't make the two ends meet. I wish to goodness Edward was the kind of man to increase his income with his expenses. It is such a boon when a man does that. I cannot help thinking that, with additional energy, a man of his undoubted ability might do it. He talks of taking the boys from school, and giving up the idea of Walter going to college; but I cannot submit to that without a struggle, for Walter is a boy who would do such credit to a complete education. He also sug-

gested a couple of junior clerkships, which would at once furnish them with something to do and a hundred a year; or gather up our resources and place them with an engineer or architect, or some other trade or profession where a living could be realised without waiting too long for it; but I cannot bring myself to the notion of cutting short their prospective careers in this way.

'I should not so much mind, perhaps, in the case of George, who, although a dear good boy, has not much style, and is, I am afraid, rather bad form; but with Walter it is altogether out of the question. I partly intimated this to Edward, but he would not listen to it. He is certainly somewhat narrow-minded and prejudiced in his views with regard to the probable advantages to be derived from social connections and associations. I cannot make him understand that a boy of Walter's exceptional capacity, appearance, and address would be absolutely thrown away in a City counting-house, while at the Bar and in society he might build up a reputation and a fortune which—which would found a family. No, Edward unfortunately has no ambition.

'Then there are the girls. He says they certainly ought to be doing something towards an independent existence. Of course he can't define what that something is to be, beyond talking vaguely of board-school teaching—preposterous! and painting on pottery—ridiculous! and he doesn't favour me with any reply as to the probability of these occupations utterly ruining the chances of their ultimate and final settlement in life. I have pointed out to him the case of young Jones, who has a decided tendency for the society of Amelia, and whose

movements being entirely at his own disposal, comes at all sorts of times to see her, and *expects* to see her. I have pointed out to him that the affair has reached that critical stage when a young man's susceptibilities, particularly a young man like Jones, are extremely sensitive. I have every hope of this matter being brought to a successful issue; but I am as certain as that I am sitting here, that any interference with it brought about by the suggested absence of Amelia would be fatal, absolutely fatal. Besides, what would the Joneses—people of almost unlimited means—think of a family of which any one of its female members had been forced to seek employment?

'Some husbands see all these things at once, and I cannot help thinking that the social management of a family with any pretensions to move in decent society should be left very much in the hands of the woman. Her action must, of course, be regulated more or less by her husband's means; but as it is her duty to seek the advancement and prosperity of those nearest and dearest to her, it is also *his* duty—plainly *his* duty—to lose no chance and spare no exertion for the purpose of increasing those means, so that the exigencies of the situation may be met and dealt with.'

This was Mrs. Berlynvoole's peroration. Of course she had not got through the whole of the above statement and indictment without an occasional interruption from Mrs. Vanderpont, which generally took the form of a grunt. Distinct articulation was difficult with that lady when in a recumbent position.

But her friend had got upon a subject which aroused all Mrs. Vanderpont's sympathies.

'You are quite right, my dear,'

she said, creating dreadfully as she got up. 'You are quite right. There is a decided want of energy amongst the men of the present day. Young and old, married and single, they are all alike. The married men never seem to understand the difficulties their wives labour under, and positively give them no assistance whatever in dealing with them; and as to the single men, *they* don't seem to have energy enough now to get married. It is really lamentable to see the number of eligible girls left to their own resources and that of their friends. My own theory is that there is a great deal too much self-indulgence amongst men, and that the young ones follow the example of their elders. I have had occasion to go into the City several times lately—some of the shops there are really well worth a visit—and to see the *crowds* of men leaving business with their bits of fish and their cigars and cigarettes at four and five o'clock in the afternoon was simply astounding. I cannot help thinking that if many of them had taken an early dinner *in* the City, and devoted the afternoon and evening to their business, it would have been the better for their families.'

'Well, Edward works hard. I must certainly give him credit for that—too hard, I often think; but he does not appear to me to see his way to his own advancement with sufficient clearness. I am afraid he is a plodder, and I am certain his peculiarities stand in his way. I had the greatest possible difficulty in getting him to interest himself on the part of Freddy.'

'You must rouse him, my dear, you must rouse him. If once you allow a man to fall into the belief that he is doing, or has done, enough for his family, and that it

is time they did something for themselves, you are practically giving him an excuse for idleness. When Vanderpont was alive I have known him stop at his place of business for weeks together. He had a small bedroom fitted at the top of the house. And it is certainly due to his unwearied attention to business I owe my present comfortable position. It was a great consolation to him in his last moments.'

I am afraid Mrs. Vanderpont was not in full possession of all the facts.

'Well, my dear, has Freddy done? We mustn't forget our drive. Will you ring the bell for Monteith? I want to give him some directions as to stopping. It is such a nuisance *en route*.'

Monteith was Mrs. Vanderpont's page. His real name was Mutton; but of course Mutton was out of the question with Mrs. Vanderpont, and she had re-christened him. I believe that in the social stratum to which Mrs. Vanderpont belonged pages have gradually gone out of use, and a good thing too; but Mrs. Vanderpont had kept a page for twenty years, and was determined not to give up the nearest approach to a liveried establishment of which her circumstances admitted. Mutton—I beg his pardon, Monteith—appeared, received his instructions for the coachman, and was told to see Freddy safely on the front seat of the carriage after his face and hands had been washed and his hair combed.

Monteith, who was a very strange and old-looking boy, with a very large head and that abnormal development of knuckle and finger which is generally associated with chalky gout, went up to Freddy with some familiarity. He evidently thought he might unbend in the society of such a

suit of clothes. As they were leaving the room together he made some remark of a jocular kind to Freddy *sotto voce* which caught the ears of Mrs. Vanderpont.

'Monteith!' she exclaimed. 'Monteith, what was that? Will you be good enough to understand that the son of one of my friends is not to be spoken to in that familiar manner by one of my servants? Don't let me have to remind you of this again.'

'I am afraid it was the clothes,' said Freddy's mamma, as they left the room.

'Nonsense, my love; you are too susceptible upon that point. It is a pity, perhaps, they don't change the dress. It is almost time they did, and I have no doubt that if a proper amount of pressure was brought to bear, they would. I am sure it would be much better if the agitators for City reform dealt with a matter like that, instead of wasting their time in trying to stop City dinners.'

The ladies prepared themselves for their drive. Freddy, who looked longingly at the box-seat, has been stowed away in the smallest possible compass. Mrs. Vanderpont, with considerable exertion on her own part, and a great deal more upon the part of Monteith, has succeeded in distributing herself as nearly as possible over the vehicle's centre of gravity, in order to equalise the pressure on the springs.

'I have my doubts of that coachman, my dear,' she said, after they had started and she had recovered the use of her voice. 'I have my doubts of that coachman. I am afraid he drinks.'

Mrs. Vanderpont jobbed her carriage, including the coachman, and the jobmaster, who had about a couple of dozen men in his employ, had tried her with all of

them ; and still, as he remarked, 'she was not happy ;' or, as she remarked, 'by no means satisfied.' In the first place, their clothes never fitted them, their hats were always brown with stress of weather, and their boots baggy and disreputable. When she had exhausted the clothes, she began upon the men. The face of one was 'repulsive,' another 'bloated,' and another had a 'constant leer.' The jobmaster at last tried the happy thought of driving her himself, but as he refused to wear any decided livery he was requested not to do it again. Mrs. Vanderpont was certainly a lady difficult to please.

They stopped at several places, and the process of getting his mistress in and out of the carriage—particularly in—reduced Monteith to such a state of disregard for appearances that he undid about two dozen of the buttons with which he was ornamented, and presented himself in that dishevelled condition before her.

'How dare you, sir, show yourself in that disgraceful state ! Look at your tunic !'

'It's so tight, and it's so hot,' pleaded Monteith.

'Tight and hot ? Do you suppose no one else is tight and hot ? Go, and button your tunic up directly. Coachman—Park.'

The Park was at its loveliest, and the beautiful Drive, bordered with acres of artistically arranged flowers, choice shrubs, and well-dressed men and women, was a sight indeed. Little Freddy, the best part of whose life for some time to come has to be passed inside the great mass of brick and stone shut in by the busy streets, enjoyed it all to the utmost extent of his limited physical ability. I am afraid the beauties of nature and art are not satisfying to boys without the unrestricted use of

their limbs. Freddy would have so liked to have got out and gone through a little acrobatic performance on one of the iron rails. The ladies nodded and smiled at those they knew amongst the crowd, and, at a signal from a portly-looking gentleman with a stupendous white waistcoat and a hat to match, the suspected coachman pulled up close to the rails.

'Gravelwitch, my dear,' whispered Mrs. Vanderpont, 'member for Qouits ; great pickle man. Immensely rich widower.'

Mrs. Berlynvoole was introduced ; the weather, the Park, and the condition of things in general discussed and summed up ; Freddy was patted on the head, and told he must make haste and become a Grecian ; and Mr. Gravelwitch took off his hat and waddled—there is no other word for it—away.

The horse's head was turned Citywards, for Freddy's holiday was nearly over. As the streets grew narrower, the little chap got closer to his mother. His hand crept into her lap, and was held there warm and fast. The bare head, with its closely-cut crop of silken hair, nestled amongst the rich trimmings of her mantle, and the clear, bright, sweet-looking eyes were every now and then full of tears. But Freddy was what schoolboys nowadays call a 'right un,' and he managed to dispose of the tears somehow or other without having recourse to their natural outlet. The streets narrow, and the great and gloomy building, the last scene of all to so many crime and sorrow laden men and women, looms upon the fresh young sight looking out—with its sorrow, too—upon the threshold of life. His mother put her arm gently round him. This nearly did for poor Freddy, and two particularly large tears, which

had been a long time coming up or down, slid over the long fringe of eyelash, and rolled down his cheeks.

Mrs. Vanderpont's double eyeglass was upon him in a moment. She had, as she phrased it, a distinct horror of scenes; and, in fact, if the expressed opinion of some intimate friends—some intimate friends are such charitable observers!—was worth anything, disliked any kind of emotion at all liable to interfere with the preparation of the mind and body for the enjoyment of dinner or the process of digestion afterwards, and this, they said, barring sleep, decoration, and of course devotion, covered nearly the whole of Mrs. Vanderpont's time.

'Now, Freddy, be a man, you know, and don't distress your mother. Laura, I wouldn't encourage that kind of thing, if I were you.'

And Mrs. Vanderpont, fearing the worst, and reflecting that it would be better for the carriage to stop short of the well-worn gates, instructed the coachman to pull up.

Freddy's arms were round his mother's neck in a moment, a kiss on each cheek, and he jumped out of the carriage, waved his hand, and vanished. When he got inside the school precincts his manhood, or his babyhood, held together so resolutely for the last

quarter of an hour, broke down altogether, and he blubbered outright.

Our pity need not follow him too far. When boys are substantially, at any rate, clothed, well fed, and lodged, they are generally 'sufficient for themselves.' Freddy was a good sound boy, and will doubtless grow into a bright and honest man. He might, perhaps, have been over young to leave the tender care and watchfulness of home; but then Necessity, the grim conqueror who keeps so many of us chained to his chariot-wheels, had spoken. Necessity? Ay, there is no harder taskmaster than the necessity we make ourselves outside of our daily wants, our daily bread—the trespasser who ravages so often the best part of our lives, and mocks at all our efforts to stop his wasteful progress.

'He didn't thank us for the drive,' wheezed Mrs. Vanderpont, putting the personal pronoun in the plural for the sake of appearances. 'Boys grow more careless in their manners every day.'

Mrs. Berlynvoole made a deprecatory gesture, and pulled her veil down sharply. She was crying too. Let her be thankful for it. It would have been hard, indeed, if the tears shed at the first great portal on the journey of that young life had fallen upon the one side only.

F. H.

HECTOR BERLIOZ.

THE *Times*, reviewing the other day the musical prospects of 1881, said: 'Mr. Charles Hallé will follow up the success of Berlioz's *Faust* by producing the same master's *Enfance du Christ*. It is a further curious fact that in the programmes of most, if not all, of these entertainments the name of Berlioz will play a prominent part. The reaction which has set in in favour of that great master among his own countrymen has found an echo in this country, and to all appearances we are going to have a Berlioz season. It is satisfactory to see that in this respect also the Philharmonic Society is *en rapport* with the spirit of the times. The first concert introduced Berlioz's overture *Waverley*; at the second the French master's dramatic symphony, *Roméo et Juliette*, by some considered his masterpiece, has been performed. Parts of this work were given in 1852, at the New Philharmonic Concerts, under the composer's own direction; but it has never been heard in its entirety in England.'

In his exceedingly curious *Mémoires* Berlioz himself says: 'I must mind not to forget the Strasbourg festival, where I was invited to direct the execution of *L'Enfance du Christ*. They had built an immense hall, holding six thousand persons. There were five hundred performers. This oratorio, almost entirely written in a sweet and tender style, seemed hardly likely to make itself heard in such a vast locality. To my very great surprise, so attentive

were the audience that it produced a deep emotion; and the concluding chorus, "O mon âme," without accompaniment, drew tears not a few. O, how delighted I feel when I behold my auditors shed tears! This chorus is far from producing an equal effect at Paris, where, by the way, it is always badly executed. I learn that during the last twelvemonth several of my compositions have been produced in America, Russia, and Germany. So much the better. Decidedly my musical career would eventually turn out charming if I could only live a hundred and forty years.'

Poor, excitable, misunderstood musician! With a much shorter measure of longevity he might have survived to witness the present admiration of his works; but such was not his destiny or his luck. Now and then he received in foreign countries, at irregular intervals, bright flashes of approval, like summer lightning, after extraordinary struggles to obtain a hearing; but at home, in Paris, those fitful gleams of hope were obscured by long periods of dreary indifference. For some time he was best known there as a sort of musical cobbler, giving lessons, or writing *feuilletons*, to live, when not otherwise occupied—a journeyman tailor, mainly employed to make second-hand lyrical clothes fit a new set of wearers.

For instance, M. Pillet, manager of the Opera, thought good to put the *Freyshütz* on his stage. Now the Paris Opera has its rules and

regulations laid down on the system of the Medes and Persians. First, all the grand vocal displays must be connected, not by spoken dialogue, but by recitative. Secondly, somewhere or other in the course of the piece a ballet must be introduced; there is no escaping it. But in all the versions or hashes of *Freyeschütz* hitherto current, there had been neither one nor the other. Berlioz was commissioned to supply them. For the recitatives he had little difficulty in following the bent of Weber's inspiration. For the ballet he had too much reverence for the master to interpolate what might be incongruous music. Pillet wanted him to introduce the ball-scene of his own *Symphonie fantastique* and the fête of *Roméo et Juliette*. He flatly refused. Then they took some dance-music from *Oberon* and *Preciosa*, which, after a few representations, was discarded. Finally they fell back on Weber's charming pianoforte lesson, the 'Invitation to Waltz,' which Berlioz orchestrated in a way that left nothing to be desired. In this form, with the incantation scene sadly mutilated, to gain more time for what might follow, the *Freyeschütz* was produced at the old, much-regretted, burnt-down opera-house, as a *lever de rideau* to some ballet pure and simple of supposed real importance—'aux plus misérables ballets,' Berlioz says. It still serves that subordinate purpose. In the *Freyeschütz* then so given the dancing vouchsafed was—well, nothing particular; all the choregraphic stars were reserving their strength for the subsequent show-off. Peasant-dancers in the heart of the Black Forest were costumed in Highland kilts made of Paris plaids. Certainly no Scotch clan would have owned them as cousins. The eye was

not greatly gratified, but the ear was spellbound by *L'Invitation à la Valse* as rendered by the orchestra. For a considerable time Berlioz was better known to the general public by that piece of 'job-work' than by anything else he had done.

Hector Berlioz was born at La Côte Saint-André, a very small French town in the Department de l'Isère, between Vienne, Grenoble, and Lyons, on the 11th of December 1803. If, therefore, it had so been written, he might quite possibly have lived to rejoice at the promotion of his works from the depths of neglect and contempt to the brilliant eminence of acknowledged *chefs-d'œuvre*. His birthplace, as its name signifies, is built on a hill-side, overlooking a luxuriant plain, with a horizon bounded by the snow-clad Alps, thus possessing quite enough sunshine and picturesque scenery to excite a naturally warm imagination. He was brought up in the Roman Catholic faith, which he thinks a most attractive religion so long as it does not burn heretics alive. For seven whole years it was his sole delight. Regularly he went to confession to whisper, '*Mon père*, I have done nothing at all.' To which the worthy director of his conscience replied, '*My son, il faut continuer*, you cannot do better than go on in the same way.' Since that time, he tells us, the Roman ritual and he had long parted company. Nevertheless, he always looked back upon it with the affectionate remembrance of an early friend. This avowal, by the way, decides the question whether the *Enfance du Christ* had its origin in deep-seated religious fervour or the mere imaginative outcome of an artistic mind.

Louis Berlioz, his father, was a medical man of considerable re-

pute as a country practitioner. Naturally he wished his son to be medical too, and sent him to Paris with that intent. But the lad did not take to anatomical skeletons; he preferred bones clothed with flesh and blood, especially when able to play and sing; for they had had nice little quartett and quintett parties at home. They had induced a music-master to leave Lyons and settle amongst them to musicalise the natives a little, which gave them another violin. Hector, for his share, took two lessons a day. From a learner and a listener he grew into a composer. He wrote a sort of *pot-pourri* in six parts on Italian themes, followed by two quintetts and a quatuor. He was then twelve and a half years old. 'Strange was the mistake,' he exclaims, 'of the biographers, who state that at twenty I did not know my notes.' The quintetts were afterwards consigned to the flames; but one phrase, approved by his father, with the words, 'Ah, this is music,' returned to his memory, and was incorporated in his first orchestral composition at Paris.

As an instrumental performer, Berlioz early became a proficient on the flageolet, the flute, and the guitar, not to mention the drum. The piano he never practised. It would have been useful to him on many occasions; but, also, the want of it helped him to avoid the innumerable platitudes which constantly spring from its use by composers. Consequently all his works were written in silence, with no other instrumental aid than that of pen, ink, and paper. In this way he was never led astray by the seduction which the piano's mere sonority and harmony often give to vulgar efforts.

His ruling passions were music

and travelling, especially into distant regions; and the two propensities helped each other. His wandering mania was partially gratified by the journeys he had to take as composer, leader, and orchestral drill-master. His father said of him, 'Hector knows the name of every one of the Sandwich Islands, the Moluccas, and the Philippines; he has Torres Strait, Java, and Borneo by heart; but he does not know how many departments there are in France.' And to get him to learn the various component parts of the human frame, as expounded in Munnro's enormous *Treatise on Osteology* by means of numerous full-sized illustrations, the anxious parent bribed him by the promise of a magnificent flute from Lyons fitted with all the newest keys. Berlioz records with a touch of pride that his own son, at a very early age, manifested the same migratory instincts, and decided to choose a sailor's life before he had even seen the sea, somewhat in the way that a Chinaman marries without having had a glimpse of his intended bride.

His chequered existence, after the choice of a profession was definitely made, resulting in estrangement from his family, would fill—as, indeed, it does fill—a volume, and that a big one. It was a stormy, troubled, restless life, which few, one would think, would like to lead—a constant alternation of mental fever fits and weeping despondency. Limited space compels us to hasten at once to what, in most men's lives, is the turning-point—his marriage.

Shakespeare went to Paris by proxy; his representatives were handsome Mr. Abbot's Hamlet and plump Miss Smithson's Ophelia. Our elder readers may re-

member that the first was an excellent well-bred walking gentleman, the second a pleasing Irish actress of no great pretensions or fame in any line of parts. The romantic school of literature, then new in France, patronised Shakespeare. The Parisian public applauded the strangers, with the conviction that they were tragic stars. Berlioz was present at the first representation of *Hamlet* at the Odéon, and at once conceived for Henriette Smithson what he calls 'a mortal love.'

His own words best describe the impression made. 'The effect of her prodigious talent, or rather of her dramatic genius, on my imagination and my heart was only comparable to the complete upsetting caused by the poet of whom she was the worthy interpreter. Next day, *Romeo and Juliet* was on the bill. From the third act until the end, scarcely breathing, as if a hand of iron were compressing my heart, I said to myself with entire conviction, "I am a lost man!" It should be added that I did not then know a word of English, and had only got a glimpse of Shakespeare through Letourneur's misty translation.

'I was long in recovering from so violent a shock. I could not sleep, and thereby lost all vivacity of mind and aptitude for work. I wandered objectless in the streets of Paris and the neighbouring country. By bodily fatigue I remember to have obtained, during that long interval, four good sleeps only, as profound as death: one night on some wheat-sheaves, in a field near Ville-Juif; one day in a meadow in the environs of Sceaux; another time on the snow, on the banks of the frozen Seine, near Neuilly; and lastly, on a table at the Café du Cardinal, at the corner of

the Boulevard des Italiens and the Rue Richelieu, where I slept five hours, to the great annoyance of the waiters, who dared not go near me, for fear they should find I was dead.'

On returning home after one of these excursions, he relieved his mind by setting to music Moore's melody, 'When he who adores thee,' expressing all the agonies of hopeless love. 'This elegiac piece,' he adds, 'is immensely difficult to sing and to accompany. If ever it is known in England and Germany, it may perhaps find a few rare sympathisers; broken hearts will therein recognise their own sufferings. But such a *morceau* is incomprehensible by the majority of Frenchmen, and absurd and senseless for Italians.'

To get a nearer view of the *grande tragédienne*, he entered the theatre during a rehearsal. Romeo, in the tomb, overwhelmed with despair, was carrying Juliet in his arms. Berlioz, after a glance at the Shakespearian group, screamed out, wrung his hands, and ran away. Juliet saw, heard, and took fright, telling the other actors to have a care of that gentleman with the wicked-looking eyes. Not a promising beginning for an ardent lover! Common-sense people will be inclined to remark: 'Genius to madness closely is allied.'

But the favour of the Paris public is far from stable. Miss Smithson went out of fashion as fast as she came in. Counting on the constancy of the Parisians' enthusiasm, she had undertaken the management of an English theatre, and rapidly experienced a *facilis descensus* towards ruin, besides which, she broke her leg—Mlle. Mars behaved admirably on that occasion—and limping Juliets do not draw. Notwithstanding which impediments Hec-

tor got presented to Henriette, and married her, in spite of her family's violent opposition. On his part he was obliged to obtain his parents' consent, according to French law, by *sommations respectueuses*, that is, by legal compulsion. On their wedding-day, all the bride possessed was debts, and the prospect of not being able to act again, in consequence of her accident. The bridegroom had three hundred francs, lent by his friend Gounet, and the strong disapproval of his father and mother.

A marriage so difficult of accomplishment ought to have been happy in its results. We can hardly, however, say of it, 'All's well that ends well.' The matrimonial sky, after overclouding, grew black and even occasionally stormy. The green-eyed monster peeped in at the window. Berlioz was invited (end of 1840) to give concerts, including some of his works, at Brussels. But to get there he had to effect a domestic *coup d'état*. Under one pretext or another his wife had always opposed his travelling projects. If he had listened to her he would never have stirred out of Paris. The real motive was foolish jealousy, for which he had for some time given no cause. To make his escape he had to smuggle his music and his trunk out of the house, leaving a letter of explanation. But he did not start for Belgium alone. A lady friend accompanied him. After being unjustly accused and tormented in a thousand ways, with neither peace nor quiet at home, he thought he might as well do something that deserved a scolding as be scolded without deserving it. Naughty Berlioz! They separated by mutual consent—*à l'amiable*. He often went to see her, with unchanged affection, which her

failing health only served to increase.

Finally death mercifully put an end to this very sad state of things. After four years' paralysis, deprived of speech and motion, *la pauvre Henriette* departed, on the 3d of March 1854; at which event Berlioz takes to raving like a madman. He married again. It was his duty, 'je le devais,' he says, italicising the obligation. Eight years afterwards his second wife died suddenly of rupture of the heart. Then, at the age of sixty-one, he fell into a state of hypochondriacal misanthropy, incessantly inviting death by saying, 'When you please! whenever you please!'

A bright episode in his gloomy career was the generous conduct of Paganini, who believed in him, and unmistakably backed his opinion that, when Beethoven passed away, Berlioz would be his legitimate successor. Paganini was the first to make the acquaintance, concluding their meeting with the flattering proposal that Berlioz should write a violin solo, to be performed on a marvellous alto, an admirable Stradivarius, on which Paganini wished to play in public. Berlioz hesitated, for the very good reason that he was not himself a performer on that instrument, and was therefore incompetent to do full justice to the powers of so brilliant a virtuoso. Paganini, already suffering from the affection of the larynx which eventually killed him, set off for Nice, and did not return till three years afterwards.

When he came back he was so gratified at a concert given by Berlioz, at which the 'Fantastic Symphony' and the 'Harold Symphony' were performed, that he publicly thanked the composer, kissed his hand, and by other gestures, in dumb-show (for his voice was all

but gone), testified the intensity of his admiration. Better than that, in the most delicate way he sent by the hands of his little son Achilles a letter, to be opened when Berlioz was alone. It contained a request to the Baron de Rothschild to remit to Berlioz twenty thousand francs which Paganini had paid into the bank for that purpose. Not only was the princely gift of important material assistance, but the approving patronage of such an artist as Paganini might have been expected to silence ill-natured critics and jealous rivals. Such, however, was not the case. His great authority was unable to put a stop to the snarlings and growlings of an envious clique of enemies, who, unable to rise themselves, resolved to keep others down by every unscrupulous means within their power.

Of the work likely to be heard most frequently in England, *L'Enfance du Christ*, he says but little in his *Mémoires*. In answer to those who assert that, in this oratorio, he had completely changed his style, he replies that nothing can be more incorrect than that opinion. The subject naturally called for sweet and simple music, and therefore more appreciable by the taste and intelligence of most *dilettanti*. The 'Flight into Egypt' first bore the inscription, 'Attributed to Pierre Ducré, imaginary *maître de chapelle*.' 'L'Adieu des Bergers' was first written for the organ, to enrich Duc's, the eminent architect's, album; his name forms the first half of that of the supposed Pierre Ducré. Berlioz, thinking that the organ-piece was marked by a character of rustic simplicity, fitted to it words written in the same style and spirit; and it thus became at once

converted into the chorus of the Bethlehem Shepherds bidding farewell to the Infant Jesus at the moment when the Holy Family were taking their departure for Egypt. This oratorio, *Roméo et Juliette*, and *Les Troyens* certainly take rank as the three principal works of the once-neglected master.

And now they are going to give him a statue, or a bust, according as subscriptions flow in; not in Paris, where his works were produced, and are now applauded, but at La Côte Saint-André, where he was born. A very influential committee has been formed, and no doubt something handsome will come of it, the rough material, whether bronze or marble, being given by the State. His fellow-citizens, who perhaps have never heard a note of his music, will behold his effigy while taking their Sunday walk.

Berlioz's photographic portrait, as given with his *Mémoires*, reminds one of 'that Cassius' who had a lean and hungry look. Or he might have sat for Don Quixote, or Werther, or any other knight of the sorrowful countenance. You see in his face the desponding sentiment which made him choose as his motto, 'Life's but a walking shadow.' His marked features and singular cast of countenance supply the subject of a striking work of art. But, bust or statue, its epitaph should be:

ALAS! POOR BERLIOZ!

MEMBRE DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE.

Oimè! Povero Berliozio.

Ach! armer Berlioz.

The admirable effort of the Philharmonic Society this season lends interest to these reminiscences.

E. S. D.

THE INNER LIFE OF A LONDON HOSPITAL.

A LONDON hospital is a town of itself, a little world of its own. It is a town with a collegiate element pervading the town. It is the very opposite of that City of Health which Dr. Richardson loves to portray, inasmuch as it is a Town of Suffering and Disease. But happily it is also much more than this. In one sense it is a Palace of Art, of all that Art can do in the alleviation of suffering and the progress of beneficial healing science. For many people it has also proved a temple fraught with sacred associations—not only for gifts of healing exercised on the worn distempered body, but perhaps of better gifts still, wrought through the ministry of sorrow. Those who look into the matter will easily see that our hospitals are among the very bases of national health and prosperity. The aids which society distributes to the hospitals are amply restored by the hospitals to society. Hospital practice is, in fact, a mirror of practice throughout the country. Mainly in these great institutions the experience and insight, the methods of observation and treatment, the scientific research, are evolved, which become employed for the general health of the country. If we could imagine the hospitals abolished, the general death-rate in all private practice would be increased. It is not too much to say that the hospitals act as a kind of insurance system for the labouring classes. They take the risks incidental to their position the more

cheerfully, because they know that if they are wounded in the battle of life they are assured of a special provision for all they need in our hospitals. The working of these great institutions is, therefore, a matter both of general interest and national importance.

There is a certain amount both of likeness and unlikeness in the London hospitals. Instead of endeavouring to reproduce the life of any one of them specially, I propose to weave together various details. The great endowed hospitals, in their vast extent and magnificent sites, are contrasted with the more modern ones slightly endowed, or not at all; one of these, namely, the London Hospital, being the most crowded of all. In Guy's there are pleasant grounds; and at St. Bartholomew's, rich in new buildings, there is the wide fountained court; and St. Thomas's has its colonnades and terraces; and St. George's is placed amid the great spaces of the parks, and has its endowed Convalescent Home at Highgate; and the Middlesex Hospital, once built out of town amid country fields, still retains its pleasant garden, a reliquary of a perished state of things. The new hospitals which have sprung up in modern times to meet the wants of densely-crowded neighbourhoods have hardly such distinctive features, except in some ecclesiastical gems, in children's and consumptive hospitals. At the same time there is a common likeness in all the details. In each there is a vigorous effort

made, though with varying degrees of success, to meet all the requirements of patients, and expand with the progress of science and of the times. In each one is all the apparatus of teaching—class-room, lecture theatres, operating theatres, museum, library, laboratories. In each all the details of diet, ventilation, surgical and medical treatment, appliances, books, refreshments (as ice and mineral waters), nursing, and supervision are carried out in very similar modes. Each hospital expands its portals night and day for the reception of urgent cases. But while each does its best according to the measure of its power and means, that measure very much varies according to circumstances. In the matter of prestige there is a great deal of difference in various hospitals. Some are of greater and some of less importance as medical schools. Some hospitals have a high standing in this respect; others rather the reverse. The condition of things in teaching power very much affects the number and character of the students. Again, the hospitals show great differences in the matter of nursing, which is often all the great business of hospitals. In some hospitals the nursing is exceedingly good, and leaves little to be desired; but in a few cases it has got into bad condition and is decidedly below par. We may have mere officialism, decayed officialism, and then the result is bad. In some instances there are hardly enough nurses to carry on the work. This sometimes arises from a want of sufficient funds to maintain an adequate staff; and even when the funds are forthcoming the full number of nurses might not be obtained. The deficiency in this respect might be fatal, save for the noble-hearted Christian women

who step forward and volunteer their services.

For my own part, I am always extremely pleased to visit a London hospital. I do not much care for the chance of witnessing an operation, or of attending a post-mortem. I had much rather find myself in the bright cheerful room of the lady matron, with plenty of books, pictures, and music, and the bright intelligence that is not absorbed in the details of office, but can see its relationship to many other questions in the broad field of humanity. It is a privilege to meet the great physician—I will not say in his consulting-room, but later, when the consulting-room is turned into a dining-room. It is pleasant that a sister should take you through her ward, show you with simple pride its modest ornamentation, and tell you of the more interesting cases. Pleasant it is to meet the medical student, who is certainly more lively and amusing now than he will be in twenty years' time. He will show you all the intricacies of the building, and explain the details of its affairs; will enable you to join the train of students, accompanying some member of the staff in his rounds; will show you the local publications of his hospital, which have always both promise and performance; will introduce you to some good fellows like himself, who are well worth the knowing. You will hear the latest bit of hospital gossip: how there has been such a jolly row at such a hospital, through the efforts of new brooms to brush over-clean; how some great man has been proved to be altogether mistaken in his diagnosis of a case; how science is baffled by the irrational objections of the nation to the humane practice of vivisection; how the Berlin fellows have got

hold of the famous Urari poison, which Waterton found in South America, which does not poison at all, but only quietly stops the mechanical action of respiration. One surgeon tells a story of how he was startled from his chair by the thunder of an explosion. It was the wall of Clerkenwell gaol blown up by the Fenians. Presently the poor sufferers were hurried into the hospital suffering from every variety of wounds and contusions. It was more like a field of battle after action than anything else in the world. He mentions it as a curious circumstance, that a large proportion of the accidents among the countless poor in the neighbourhood was caused by lamps with benzoline and other oils being overturned and exploded.

There is always a pleasant social element in a hospital. In some hospitals there are treasurers, themselves people of income and position. At one hospital they furnished a house for the treasurer at an expense of 4000*l*. At another hospital the treasurer has, or used to have, a large annual income. Other hospitals do not possess the luxury of a treasurer; but, marvellous to relate, they not only thus save a great quantity of money, but appear to get on just as well. The treasurer's house, as the needs of the metropolis increase, may be advantageously converted into additional wards. Of course in these rich treasurers' houses there is any amount of general society. When there is only a secretary or a manager, his abode is frequently a focus for much pleasant genial society in the hospital itself. Members of the staff may stray in there: the sisters, and perhaps friends of the sisters, may come; the house-surgeon or one of the dressers may drop in. The resident officers

have their private rooms, and there are rooms for those who, like the Early Christians, take all things in common. That a hospital is a great educational school is a fact of which we never lose sight for long together while rambling about the wards. There is nothing like clinical teaching, after all. The students exactly rehearse the kind of business which they will have to go through by and by. Above each bed is a paper, generally drawn up by a student, on a board, detailing the name, age, disease, treatment, diet of the patients, to which additions are made so often as need may be. I suppose that most of the cases are of such a commonplace nature that no scientific interest attaches to them. But in a large number of other cases the interest is considerable. The physician or surgeon, accompanied by a procession, more or less long, of students, approaches the bedside of the sufferer. It must be well-nigh impossible at times for those who are in the tail of the procession either to see or hear. Sometimes the patient lies as quiet as possible while the lecturer prods, sounds, thumps, listens, analyses, and discourses about him. He knows that it is all for the general good of the world, and that if he receives public hospitality he must make this return for it. Occasionally, the patient, particularly if it be a female patient, vehemently objects to contributing to the public stock of information, and testifies the same by sighs, groans, contortions of countenance, and general convolutions. Sometimes a patient, if it is an interesting surgical case, is had down to a theatre and a demonstration made of him. In addition, the staff may have a solemn consultation about him, and decide whether a limb

is to be taken off, or if modern conservative surgery insists on its being retained. If the former, our patient makes a further public appearance on the table of the operating theatre. It can hardly be pleasant for a sufferer to have a hundred pair of scrutinising eyes fixed upon him; but this, too, is one of the things that must be endured. I heard, however, of one brave old Scotchman who took matters in the proper light. 'Eh, mon,' he exclaimed, 'it was a real grand sight, to see dochter so quick, and all the laddies staring at him.' I have heard that there is a plan by which the public spectacle may be avoided; but I hardly see how this can be achieved without some sacrifice of public instruction. If it is written in the Fates that our supposed patient should continue to be a public character, he will probably figure in the post-mortem room, and finally as an object of dissection.

Respecting the dissection room, indeed, the sympathetic British public will hardly bear more than has been revealed to them by Mr. Bob Sawyer and Mr. Benjamin Allen. As intimidated by one of these gentlemen, students have to buy subjects, an ordinary limb costing half-a-sovereign, to which half-a-crown is added for a *caput mortuum*. At the present time the supply is drawn from unclaimed patients in the hospitals and unclaimed paupers in the workhouses. There is something very painful, and even horrible, in this last idea. I have known in my time one or two young men, of good hopes, good prospects, who have, nevertheless, gone to the bad and to the dogs, destined to complete an unhonoured career as patients or paupers, and whose ultimate issue it is to come to the dissection rooms as

surely as the cruel youth in Hogarth's revolting picture.

The expenses of a medical education are necessarily very heavy, although they may be greatly lightened in the case of studious and deserving men. The hospital fees alone are some forty pounds a year for three or four years, or they may be commuted for the payment of a hundred pounds down. The best surgeons and physicians are glad to be on the staff of the great hospitals. When they have so been for many years, the *emeritus* professor has the honorary rank of consulting physician or consulting surgeon. The fees derived from students would not be an adequate return for the amount of labour and anxiety bestowed on the lectures and demonstrations. The reward is found not so much in the direct as in the indirect returns. It is a great thing to be selected from the profession, and be labelled as the recipient of the highest trusts and honours which can be conferred upon its members. Again, all these young men are future practitioners, and they will send up to their old tutors and masters an indefinitely large number of consultation cases. In this way hospital work reacts very favourably on general practice, and most medical men of eminence look forward to a hospital appointment as a legitimate object of professional ambition.

All the hospitals have chaplains attached to them. Even those who care the least for the ministrations of a chaplain admit that they are a necessary adjunct to the work of a hospital. They meet the patient on the side of his intellectual and spiritual wants; they soothe and cheer, they brace and elevate, him. It is not to be forgotten that St. Luke was a physician, as he was also probably

a painter. Caius College, Cambridge, is a great medical college, and on the painted glass of its chapel are displayed divers miracles of healing. All the hospital chapels in London are interesting, some of them are of remarkable interest and beauty. The chapel of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, founded by the good minstrel Rahere, is also the church of the tiniest parish in London, numbering, I believe, only some twenty souls. On a small scale there is almost a cathedral-like beauty and completeness in the chapels of the Children's Hospital in Great Ormond-street and the Consumption Hospital at Brompton. It is to be regretted that chaplains of hospitals, who have peculiarly arduous and earnest work, hardly obtain at the hands of the Church or of the public that amount of reward and recognition to which they are justly entitled. It would be an honour to such an important body if a canonry or even a bishopric was given in this direction, or even if they had their turn in preaching at Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's. But in this topsy-turvy world of ours honours are too frequently bestowed in inverse proportion to deserts. Of the chaplains those seem to be most heavily taxed who are resident in the hospital itself, frequently married men with families. Of course it is a great advantage to be close to your work; but it is also a great thing to get away from your work. The physicians and surgeons are very glad to get away from the place to the home and club at the West-end. However unpropitious for himself, it is best for the interests of the hospital when the chaplain resides on the spot or near to it. Very few parish-priests are so heavily taxed from morning to night as the hos-

pital chaplains. And very few parishioners receive such constant ministrations from their clergymen as do prisoners and hospital patients. There is literally no end to his work. There is all kind of extra-parochial work to do. He assorta, distributes, and very often has to collect books and periodicals. In a few hospitals he helps to organise entertainments for the patients. If he is an earnest man he endeavours to keep an eye on the medical students, who do not always receive his attentions in a 'reciprocal spirit.' He receives all kinds of confidences, and is overladen with all sorts of commissions. He has something to do with the preparing of reports and the reception of visitors. There is hardly an hour of the day or night in which a sudden incursion may not be made upon his time. There is a great tendency to ignore his services.

The hospital with which I have been most impressed is St. Thomas's. I have no doubt that a magnificent future belongs to this grand foundation. It is rather on its past and on its future than on its present state that its friends will care to dwell. At the present moment the hospital is under financial observation. It has, indeed, been singularly unfortunate. When its former site was wanted by the railway, the question of the value of the site was referred to arbitration. The hospital hoped to obtain 800,000*l.*, but it did not obtain much more than half. The new buildings were to cost half a million; they have cost 600,000*l.*, and 100,000*l.* has been raised by mortgage. When the hospital was temporarily located in the Surrey Gardens, the rates and taxes amounted to 500*l.* a year, which was not unreasonable; but the present buildings are mulcted in three,

four, or five thousand a year. The result is that several wards are empty, about one-third of the hospital being lost to the public. I cannot but think also that the system of reticence maintained by the authorities is prejudicial to the interests of the institution. The wildest legends are afloat respecting the wealth of the hospital and the privileges of the treasurer. Alderman Stone has certainly got a very good house, as good in its way as that of the Speaker of the House of Commons on the other side of Westminster Bridge; but, whatever may have been the state of things in times past, he has no stipend, and the hospital, so far from being wealthy, is lamentably poor. Yet it prints no accounts, publishes no annual report, and the greatest difficulties are put in the way of any one wishing to go over it. I repeatedly applied for permission to view, and was refused or ignored. I accordingly adopted the simple plan of walking into the building, and impressing into my service the first individual who would show me over it. The hospital has no share in the grants of Hospital Sunday and Hospital Saturday, has no subscription, and a comparatively scanty share of public knowledge and public sympathy. Yet here are the beds waiting for patients, and the patients waiting for beds, and valuable space is lying empty and idle because there are no funds to defray the working expenses. I am sure that if the public understood the urgent needs and remarkable merits of this hospital, the old endowments would be adequately complemented by that great national agency, the Voluntary Subscription.

For the merits of this hospital are indeed remarkable. The site is of unrivalled magnificence. It

fronts the imperial river, quayed and embanked, directly opposite the magnificent palace of the Imperial Legislature. Two handsome colonnades run north and south. To the south one portion of the buildings fronts the gardens of Lambeth Palace. A river-path runs along the embankment, and in addition each ward has a balcony opening upon the river. The hospital has a character for airiness, space, and lightness most unusual in such sombre edifices. It is built in separate blocks, communicating with covered galleries. Great facilities are effected by this arrangement: infectious cases, for instance, are easily isolated, and the evils of what Sir James Y. Simpson called 'hospitalism' are diminished or removed. The medical school stands separate and apart, the last and unconnected portion of the immense range. There is, however, a passage underground which connects this separate edifice with the general range of buildings. Through this passage the remains of deceased patients are conveyed from the wards to the mortuary. From the upper wards they are lowered by a lift into this tunnel, and so conveyed into the mortuary or the post-mortem room or the dissecting-room.

In this interesting hospital the arrangements for the comfort and improvement of the young men are, in the highest degree, satisfactory and complete. It is easy to see that every modern improvement has been adopted. The young gentlemen have all the necessary tools in their hands, if they only know how to use them and turn their knowledge to account. Library, laboratory, lecture-rooms, are very fully provided. The museum and the reading-room are splendid chambers, magnificently fitted up. The

reading-room, which, of course, is entirely devoted to scientific publications, is a noble apartment, with a splendid outlook upon the river. Every department of knowledge bearing upon the profession is assiduously cultivated, and all the necessary appliances are abundantly provided. We are bound to say that this applies to the other hospitals as well as to St. Thomas's; but at St. Thomas's there is more space, and, as it seems to us, a greater degree of completeness. The operating theatre is, of course, in the hospital itself. Generally speaking, there are a few bedrooms close to the operating theatre for the comfort and convenience of the patients. There is the lecture-room in medicine, ditto in surgery, ditto in physiology, ditto in chemistry. With the exhaustive preparations in the laboratories for chemistry and physiology, I was especially struck. With the exception of the sleeping out, the students might altogether live on the premises; a considerable number of them, as dressers and house-surgeons, actually do so. In a kind of subterranean chamber, which is, nevertheless, very snug and pleasant, there is an excellent refreshment-room fitted up, with a regular bar. I looked at the bill of fare; a very good bill of fare, with remarkably low prices; but then, of course, the management have got no rent or taxes to pay, which accounts for the moderate charges of the viands. In matters of commissariat the hospital is provident and liberal. There is a counter fitted up where the house-patients may obtain cheap and wholesome refreshment; a cup of hot coffee for a penny, and for another penny something to eat with it. On visiting days, or at times when hundreds of out-patients are re-

ceived, the services of the maiden at the counter are in great requisition.

The interest of a hospital is indefinitely heightened when we come to take cognisance of the separate cases; when, instead of regarding them as mere letters or numerals, we are enabled to take an interest in each pathetic individual instance. So numerous are the cases, so rapid their transit through the hospital, where there is a constant process of coming in and going out, that it is hard for doctors and nurses to individualise them or retain their leading features. These cases are often full of interest, full of absorbing interest. In fact, I often wonder how doctors and nurses can go through such heartrending work. It is, however, a blessed law—some of my readers may remember how Bishop Butler works it out—that while people are engaged in action, both the skilfulness of the hand and the sympathy of the heart improve, while the sensitivity to pain works off. Constantly in the hospitals we meet with persons of what is called a superior position in life. It is well understood on the one hand that patients do well in a larger proportion in private cases than in a hospital. On the other hand there is a combination of skill and method in a hospital that can seldom be attained at home. Some hospitals pride themselves on exercising that 'hospitalism' which Sir James Simpson so eagerly denounced; and, of course, if this could be eliminated it would make the hospital system best of all. An attempt has lately been made to establish a private hospital for gentlefolk, and a house was actually taken in the neighbourhood of Berkeley-square; but the attempt was defeated by those who dreaded the proximity

of a hospital, on the ground that such an intention was entirely outside the conditions of the lease. The movement, however, is making way, and will yet bear good fruit. Where the advantages of the hospital system are fully recognised, people often express a wish that they may receive hospital treatment; and in the case of accident or sudden illness, patients are carried at once into the wards.

Thus, to speak simply of incidents that have come under one's own personal cognisance, and most readers can supply something of the sort from their own experiences, I knew a barrister of some repute who was knocked down in the streets. He immediately requested to be taken to a certain hospital, where he lay for many weeks, was carefully attended, and completely recovered. I am very glad, indeed, to see that an association has been formed for the purpose of endeavouring to arrest the number of street accidents. To the best of my observation the drivers of carts and omnibuses seem to consider the public streets as peculiarly their own property, and they appear to advance year by year in recklessness. No one can go much about the London hospitals without perceiving that an immense proportion of the cases are those which have arisen from avoidable street accidents. I have known of such accidents happening just in front of the hospital, and, of course, the sufferers have been directly helped into the wards. Cabmen do not like being fined, but their fines would go a very small way towards the expenditure they cause. So much, then, for a considerable proportion of sufferers, who, of course, belong to every class of society. I have known the young lady thrown from her horse carried into the

hospital, and staying there for months. I have known the poor clergyman from the country, well aware that he could not long avoid an operation, come up to the friendly hospital where he might find a refuge in his hour of trouble. I have known the man of letters seeking here a period of holiday and repose, and afterwards sending to the hospital authorities a book which he had composed in part during his illness. In the same way many persons in a highly solvent condition get admitted, and it is one of the arguments towards paying wards that their conscience does not always call upon them to defray their own expenses, although quite able to do so.

The nursing power of a hospital is distributed between 'sisters' and 'nurses.' These sisters are to me always most interesting. They are not the less interesting if they do not belong to some religious sisterhood. They are frequently real ladies, ladies of great abilities and attainments. They are sometimes extremely well off, and take to the profession through intense devotedness to the work. They are obliged to receive a salary; but I know at least of one sister who takes up the money with one hand and lays it down with the other. I know of another nurse who receives, indeed, her salary, but lays it out—every farthing, and more besides—in promoting the comfort of her patients. The 'nurses' are the lower grade, and they are occasionally promoted to the rank of 'sisters.' There have been great improvements of recent years in the conduct and training of nurses. There is still room for improvement. They should always be punctual, sober, good-tempered, and never receive money from patients. They are

well treated, fairly paid, have much consideration shown them, though their holidays might be lengthened. Several hospitals have now their own training schools for nurses. St. Thomas's Hospital trains a great number in connection with the Nightingale Fund.

'Yes,' said one of the sisters to whom I spoke, 'I have gone pretty well through the whole thing.' She was a nice ladylike woman, with bright quick eyes, a pleasant composed manner, and a great mixture of shrewdness and benevolence. In fact, this is almost the normal type of 'the sister.' 'I began at the very bottom, and had to go down on my knees to wash and scrub the floor.'

'But what was the object of that, sister?'

'I am sure I don't know, except that it was the rule, and we all had to do it; and I did it. I was a probationer at first. Now I am a sister. I have two nurses under me during the day, and there is always one night nurse. If I wanted any more assistance, I should be able to get it. Until lately we had to find ourselves in everything. Now we have our dinner given, which is so far an improvement in our condition, with some fairish table-beer or porter. Everything else we get for ourselves.'

I may here observe that St. Katherine's clasp, awarded by the Queen, cannot fail to have a good effect upon the status of nurses.

In the management and internal life of a hospital the question of the nurses and sisters must always come uppermost. Most of our readers have read the biography of Dorothy Pattison, the sister of the Rector of Lincoln College, well known in university and literary circles. It is

not to be supposed that hospital sisters can rise to the heroic height of 'Sister Dora.' She was a woman of extraordinary genius and character, the like of whom is rarely to be found in a generation. But they can hardly err if they follow on the lines which her bright example has held out to them. She belonged originally to a religious sisterhood; and as the present tendency is to hand over hospital nursing to such sisters, her experience is instructive. She was hardly dealt with by the Mother Superior. She was ordered to scour floors and grates, to act as a common cook; and when her father was dying, she was refused permission to see him. It is not to be wondered at that, although she retained the name and garb of 'sister,' she practically renounced the connection. 'I am a woman,' she said, 'and not a piece of furniture.' It is no secret that recent events in Guy's Hospital, in which the staff and the ecclesiastical sisterhood have been brought into sharp antagonism, sufficiently indicate that a position of great jealousy should always be maintained in relation to religious sisterhoods. In the case of strong-minded females Nature generally takes her revenge by exhibiting some very vulnerable part. In the case of this princess among nurses, Miss Lonsdale faithfully permits us to observe her friend's weak points. She was a magnificent woman, with superb strength and energies, which she abused by carrying abstinence from food and sleep to the extent of absurd bravado. Then she would habitually sit in her wet things until they dried upon her. She threw aside wedded love, and her heart told her that she had made a mistake. She was a thoroughly self-willed woman, and, acting against the wishes

of her father, her conscience told her that she had erred. 'I was very wilful,' she said on her death-bed; 'I did very wrong. Let no one take me for an example.' We have said this much, following the biographer, of her defects, because faithful biography is the best kind of biography, and because her defects may be useful to her sisters. We glance at her biography as far as it illustrates the general subject.

The great secret of her power in a ward was her intense sympathy, combined with cheerfulness and courage. All sisters and nurses might follow her example in these essentials of good nursing. Her work lay in the Black Country; and she worked hard for the physical, moral, and spiritual good of the most debased portion of the population. Her influence over 'the roughs' was immense. She was able to do a great deal in stemming the torrent of drunkenness. No detail was too humble or too minute for her attention. She washed her patients, made their beds, dressed their wounds, wrote their letters for them, gave them their dinners, talked to them, prayed with them. And she was never satisfied with herself, though all that local world resounded with her praises. 'She told us once that she often cried when she went to bed at night to think how many good words she might have spoken in season to her men.' 'This is not an ordinary house or even hospital,' she would say. 'All who serve here, in whatever capacity, ought to have one rule, *love for God*, and then I need not say love for their work. I wish we could use and really mean the word, *Maison Dieu*.' She had a keen eye for the weaknesses of lady-pupils who came to be taught the craft of a hospital.

Perhaps they had had a matrimonial disappointment, or they could not get on at home, and thought that the air of a hospital might agree better with their temper. Some took to it merely from want of something to do, and others in order to earn an honest and independent livelihood. When she saw any instance of fine-ladyism, she used to say, 'What on earth does the woman mean by coming here, then?'

One advantage of this well-known biography, and it is also the humble aim of this paper, is to bring the general public more *en rapport* with these palaces of human suffering. It is sad to think that many of them have to maintain a chronic fight for subsistence, while thousands of people have thousands of pounds lying idle, which might promote the great objects of science and beneficence. It is not difficult for any one to obtain some acquaintance with the interior of a London hospital. If you have sent a servant or some poor person to a hospital, do not let your charity stop at that point, but visit the sufferer in the great retreat of the afflicted. It is better to go to such a house of mourning than to many a house of feasting. It is a well-known circumstance that when the Princess of Wales suffered from the rheumatic attack which threatened such serious consequences, the Prince was constant in his visits to St. Bartholomew's Hospital—with which Sir James Paget and Sir William Gull have been so intimately connected—that he might observe similar cases. There are some persons who take an especial interest and delight in hospital visitation. The beautiful words, 'I was sick, and ye visited Me,' will never lose their hold upon the human heart. Few nurseries, even of the wealthy, are better

supplied with pictures and toys than the children's hospitals throughout the country. Here let

me quote from Mr. Tennyson's little poem on a Children's Hospital in his last volume :

' Here was a boy—I am sure that some of our children would die,
But for the voice of love, and the smile and the comforting eye—
Here was a boy in the ward, every bone seemed out of its place,
Caught in a mill and crushed, it was all but a hopeless case;
And he handled him gently enough; but his voice and his face were not kind,
And it was but a hopeless case, he had seen it and made up his mind,
And he said to me roughly, "The lad will need little more of your care,"
"All the more need," I told him, "to seek the Lord Jesus in prayer;
They are all His children here, and I pray for them all as my own."
But he turned to me, "Ay, good woman, can prayer set a broken bone?"
Then he muttered half to himself, but I know that I heard him say,
"All very well, but the good Lord Jesus has had His day."
Had? Has it come? It has only dawned. It will come by and by.
O, how could I serve in the wards if the Hope of the world were a lie?
How could I bear with the sights and the loathsome smells of disease,
But that He said, "Ye do it to Me, when ye do it to these?"

After the harvest festivals, which are now so common, the fruit and flowers are generally sent to some hospital, and it is frequently the knowledge of this fact which determines the largeness of the gift. In some districts arrangements are made by charitable-hearted ladies to send regular supplies, within the limit of hospital rules, of what may be grateful and refreshing to the patients. On certain days ladies, who may be allowed the privilege—and such they assuredly reckon it themselves—glide quietly through the wards, and form many happy intimacies and friendships with the sufferers. There is at times a certain amount of enthusiasm about young ladies on the subject of nursing which requires to be regulated or even repressed, according to the dictates of maternal wisdom. A perfectly model visitor was the late Mr. Huth, a man of great wealth, great scientific attainments, and unbounded benevolence. He attached himself to a special hospital, which, almost beyond any other, levies a demand upon human sympathy, a Hospital for Incurables. Mr. Huth made himself the personal friend of his afflicted brethren and sisters. He believed that the true theory of a hospital, towards which they all

strive without exactly realising it, was, that it should be a home. He sent the patients pictures, musical instruments, invalid-chairs—any comforts and appliances which he knew would be useful. Every week he used to come up from his place in Sussex to see them. They looked forward to his visits, and he looked forward to them himself. In the summer months he used to give them drives in the country, and would help them to get to the seaside for a season, and would devise recreation for all. It was his intense personal sympathy with the wants of each individual which gave his conversation such a charm and influence. There is certainly a great opening for more visitors of this stamp. They will find a rich reward in the knowledge both of the blessings which they bring and the blessings which they receive; in witnessing the tragedy, the pathos, the patience, the heroism of the suffering; in affording sympathy and appreciation to those who are labouring to reduce the huge mass of human misery; and in the conviction that what real help they give serves to promote and distribute the services of love and science which ameliorate the lot and advance the interests of human society.

WHO WAS JOHN KYRLE ?

It is right to have more than a vague knowledge of John Kyrle. Good men are the gold capitals set at the head of chapters to enrich a chronicle : the world as it lives is itself the largest and the longest chronicle there is, ever adding, besides, to its bulk by huge tome and tome ; so all the less can there be spared from it the smallest item of enrichment.

The 22d of May 1637 was the birthday of John Kyrle. His birthplace was the White House at Whitefield, Dymock, on the edge of Dymock Wood, where he had the right of 'fallage' (the gathering of coppice and brushwood for culinary and chamber purposes) ; this being in that corner of Gloucestershire which abuts on Herefordshire, lying beautifully between those two fair rivers the Severn and the Wye. The Kyrles were 'gentlefolk.' As the little John lay in his cradle in that year 1637, with Civil War terribly close at hand ; with Milton, Cromwell, Hampden, Prynne, Penn, Hobbes, watching the seething of it, and helping it, more or less, to come ; with Laud, Strafford, the King, watching also, but keeping a watch that brought them so little warning it very speedily led them straight to death—as the little John grew up into strength and speech and school-dom, the influences of his gentle blood were all about him, and the influence of the times and the part his kinsmen had played, and were playing, in the country's life. Goodrich Castle being near by, and being besieged in 1646,

when young John Kyrle was nine years of age, it was a Colonel Kyrle, with a body of horse and dragoons, who was helping Colonel Birch over the besieging, having previously done similar efficient service at Raglan. In 1635 there was a Sir John Kyrle, the boy's uncle, residing at Sellack. In 1628 there was a fine monument erected in Much Marcle Church to a preceding Sir John Kyrle and his lady. In 1625 this same baronet was sheriff, with a second Kyrle, James, to share his duties with him. In 1603 James I., pricking out the first sheriffs that were to serve him, pricked two Kyrles again, John and Robert, the two writing Armiger after their names, and being necessarily knights of note. In 1520 (about) a Walter Kyrle was residing in Walford Court ; and in Walford Church there was Kyrle Chapel erected for the family's use. In 1501 (about) the father of this Walter Kyrle, Thomas Kyrle, married Joane Abrahall, heiress to much money, their children counting up to thirteen—nine sons and four daughters. In 1295 a Kyrle (the name meanwhile having stood in the various forms of Kirle, Curl, Crul, Cryl) was living at Homme, or Hom, Green. In 1289—as the Household Roll of Swinfield, Bishop of Hereford, tells—Robert Kyrle was bailiff of Ross, a 'villein' attached to the manor, and had fifteen shillings paid to him, on November 15, for 'porci' he had supplied, with fourpence more of payment, on December 1, to set the curious

account square. It was all surrounding the young John Kyrle, in one way or another; it was all making him a Herefordshire man (for all he was born just over the border); it was all making him identify himself with Herefordshire, have Herefordshire life at heart; and it should not fail to have recognition in considering the good part he played.

He was to go to college, of course. Balliol, Oxford, was the one chosen, and he was entered of it as gentleman-commoner on April 21, 1654. The custom on entering was to give 'caution-money,' to be expended on plate. A silver tankard was bought with John Kyrle's money, weighing somewhat over eighteen ounces. Lad of seventeen as he was, he declared that if this weight were ever exceeded, he would exceed it again; and, true to his word, as well as foreshowing the generous man he was to become, he generously kept this promise in 1670, when he substituted a tankard that weighed sixty-one ounces, and a little more.* Leaving college, a profession had to be adopted, and John Kyrle chose the Bar. He was bred to it, but no evidence exists of anything beyond this; and, 'gentle' as he was, he went back to his county among his gentle kinfolk. He inherited some land at Ross his father had bought of one Fecknam; he inherited in all about 500*l.* a year; and this gentle county life suggested so much usefulness to him, gave him so much good satisfaction, he clove to it and settled in Ross, and never left it any more.

* By kind information afforded by the Master of Balliol, it can be reported that this tankard is still in constant use, increased somewhat in weight by repairs. 'The Man' is the familiar name at Balliol of John Kyrle. The following stands in the College books: 'April 21, 1654. Johannes Kyrle admissus est Socio-commensalis.'

He did not marry. To keep his house he had a kinswoman, a Miss Judith Babb—'Miss Jude,' as she grew to be called; and whatever were his good aspirations and his good practices, Miss Jude was ever ready, happily, to further it all, and to further it with a Kyrle-like hand. He was plain in his dress, plain to Roundheadism; in his brown-cloth doublet and jerkin (called even then, being of one colour, a 'suit of dittos'), his long falling cambric neckcloth, his full curling wig. He was so plain that, travelling once near Oxford, he was apprehended as a robber, prowling about after robbery, and ready for robbery again, being, however, immediately released when he gave his name; and this plainness in the Cavalier times, when gentlefolk were mostly Cavalier, for constancy, made him a subject of remark. But he was not Roundhead in any one single thing besides. He was stanch to his king; he was stanch to State and Church—all. When he built his Jacobean house in Ross Market-place, with its fifty feet of slightly frontage, its projecting stories, its carved timbers, its many long, low, small-paned windows, he had a great C carved on the corner of the Jacobean Market-hall, that he could see as he sat; he had a great L carved behind the C; he had a great heart carved at the bottom of the C; the whole to mean, as it faced him perpetually, 'Love King Charles from the Heart.' He was merry, too, and genial, and easy of access. Having the advantage of being healthy and well-shaped and tall and slim, he was the very man for the Court-painter, Sir Peter Lely, to paint (as it is said Lely did); he was the very man to sit handsomely at the head of his table on Ross market-days (Miss Jude at the foot), welcom-

ing all to dinner who were brought to town for market occasions, who would take plain fare as he plainly gave it, who would respond to the toast he never failed to give (in Herefordshire cider or home-brewed) of 'The Church and King.' Of the dishes he would provide, there was boiled beef in his kitchen every Sunday for such poor as liked to come; there was roast beef at Christmas-tide only; there was, whenever there could be, roast goose. If a guest, in the table-courtesy of the time, offered to take the labour of carving the favourite bird, John Kyrle would cry, 'Hold your hand, man! If I am fit for anything, I am fit for this!' and heartily he would help it out himself. When his guests were served, and his food-requirements for the day were seen, he gave what was left to the poor in the almshouse at his garden-door. Round about him all came who could, and all were welcome. If the poor were ill, there was the store of drugs; there was Miss Judith Babb to bid the maids make broth, and John Kyrle gave of it. If the Bluecoat boys growing up in the Ross Bluecoat School were in due course to be apprenticed, there was advice wanted, and correspondence and negotiation, and John Kyrle gave of that. If a child was born, and no man was willing to be godfather to it, John Kyrle was told, and John Kyrle 'stood.' If a towns-person died, or a neighbour in any of those near villages where the Kyrles abounded, John Kyrle attended the funeral, and walked in the sorrowful procession as sympathetically as the rest. If the inhabitants had disputes—of rights of way, of leasings, of measurements, of ceremonies, of misconstruction, of what else—all agreed to abide by John Kyrle's

settling; and over a cider-cup in his Stuart parlour he would cool the quarrel down. There was a great case that he was called upon to decide in 1674. A 'lord' in the olden time had agreed that for all corn brought into Ross Market he would give so much for the use of the poor. John Kyrle would see that this corn was made into bread (because in that way it would do the poor most service). Week after week John Kyrle would set his Miss Jude and her maids to making this bread and baking it in his own oven, after which, Saturday by Saturday, he would stand on the Market-hall steps, himself distributing the loaves, that justice (and graciousness) might be done. But it ended, this; for the descendant of the 'lord' said the gift had been only for a time, that the time had long since gone by, and that the corn should be handed out no more. It was the very thing that John Kyrle would deeply regret; that he would warmly battle for, if battling could be done; and the townsfolk petitioned him to do it. Alas, when he looked into the matter, it was to his grief; for the 'lord' was right; the poor had been having the corn unjustly for years; and John Kyrle was forced to declare, against the inmost heart of him, that no more injustice must be done. It was in this unofficial manner that he liked to administer the law. He was on the Commission of the Peace; he was chosen High Sheriff in 1683; but if he acted publicly at all, it was only when there was no evading it, and he was still bent far more on little homely adjudications and kindnesses to be done with his own hand. 'Good sir,' he wrote, on 'the 8th day of November' 1703, when one Thomas Hopkins owed Mr.

Walwyn of Longworth 'a good deal of rent,' and he had been solicited to beg for time in paying it, 'he sed he will be sure by Christmas to clear with you last Lady-day's rent, and last Michaelmas rent before next Lady-day. The first I believe he will do, but I fear he will not be punctual to the latter.' And then he adds, which shows the home-life of him so charmingly, 'I think to be with you on Saturday next in ye evening, if ye weather proves favourable; but of that I am not certain, for our maid Frances lyes very ill, and 'tis feared will not recover. . . . Miss Jude and Nancy Weale give their services to all ye ladies.'

Out about the town at all times was John Kyrle. His fields (naturally) were not in the market-place; he had to walk to them; and there and back to them he would go two or three times a day, carrying his spade, carrying his cider-bottle, carrying even a watering-can, if he had been planting, and he knew his young plants would wither without a sprinkling. Yet when the church-bell rang, on every day, weekday as well as Sunday, he laid all occupation aside, he washed hands for seemliness, and he walked up to the church to pray. Dr. Whiting, his dear friend, was the clergyman; and as he helped him in all good parish work—sanitary, embellishing, philanthropic—so, with all the might there was in him, he helped him there. He had not been born the Earl of Ross, the Baron of Ross, the Knight of Ross, but he had made himself the Man of Ross; he was manfully pleased that men should call him so, and he showed what, with a man's true heart in him, a man in this world might do. Pope hearing of this title on visiting some Roman Catholic friends, the Sy-

monds family, near by (where, possibly, John Kyrle himself had visited, since he was tolerant, beautifully, in those intolerant times, and never would sanction bonfires or other triumphs on the anniversaries of Guy Fawkes' day), Pope, writing in an arbour in the Symonds' grounds, made the title immortal. For though Kyrle had been dead for years when the poet's visiting took place, there could be seen the spire he had obtained an assessment to raise, and had overlooked daily that it might be raised well; there could be seen the clusters of shading trees, growing more and more shady, that he had planted; there could be seen the Cleave-field Wood he had lightened out with walks, and made restful with comfortable seats; the Prospect Gateways he had had designed and cast; the causeway he had laid out; the vicarages of Much Marcle and Foy, where his taste (and sense) had been obeyed; the fine Hill House (a friend's mansion) that he had contrived. There could be seen even such minor things as the pinnacles of Ross tower he had added, as the Kyrle arms—three fleur-de-lys and a chevron, in gold, on a cobalt ground—that he had himself drilled in 1689 in his own bed-chamber, in his Market-place house. And Pope, stirred as a poet should be, could not but recognise that John Kyrle's life had been a noble life, and he strove to stir others to the same noble doing.

In 1691 John Kyrle was at Gloucester at a foundry, eager over the casting of Ross Church bell. It was to ring out to a score of villages more loudly than ever Ross bell had rung before; it was to be called by his name; and, standing by the molten metal with his silver tankard in

his hand, he drank from it 'To Church and King !' and then flung it in, as worthy christening. Later still, in 1714, his name is in borough records. He went to Berkeley, Gloucestershire, to vote for the two members, Moreton and Stephens; and then, ten years further on, there was an end. On November 7th, 1724, all Ross mourned. This Man, eighty-seven years old, with his kind face, his kind words, his kind heart, would be seen no more; and when he was carried to his grave, on the 20th, not a creature stayed away. His workmen were his bearers; his body was laid at the feet of the body of his friend Dr. Whiting, as had been his special desire.

'And what? No monument, inscription, stone?'

asks Pope. Yes, the parish clerk, he being the mas'er of the Blue-coat School as well, went reverently to the church-wall that overlooked the good man's grave and chiselled J. K. upon it, with the best power he had. The great bell that had been his gift fell off its wheel soon after his funeral, seeming to the grieving people to speak of him still. Twenty years after, in 1744, the church being to be repewed, the people with one accord would not have his pew so much as touched. Eighty years after, on November 7th, 1824, when he had been dead a century, the ringers mounted to his bell and gave it a muffled peal.

Besides, there is not wanting now a monument to John Kyrle of the ordinary sort. After a relative, Vandervort Kyrle, for some time renovating his walks and seats, after another relative, Walter Kyrle, in 1750, putting him up a stone, in 1776 the then Lady Kinnoul left 300*l.* for a monument to him; her heir,

Colonel Money, faithfully attended to her request, and there, in Ross Church, a bust being part of it, the monument stands.

Stay. Let the line of Pope's about a monument to John Kyrle be read again. Asking a question as it does,—which straightway was strictly answered,—let this question create a second question, and let there be a reading—ay, and a second reading—also of that.

Is there no other sort of monument but one of so much granite, cubic measure—of so many bars, and through bars, of beaten iron,—of so many words and phrases, conventionally chiselled in, and arbitrarily 'set out'? Surely there is. The granite is convenient, to be sure. For one such is enough for a man; one such, after the planning of it, the putting up, the paying for, has carried the subject to its far limit, and given it its claim to the privilege of clean dismissal. Granted it may be niggardly to hold back that one for ten years, till a poet is moved to clamour for it; to hold it back for twenty years, till a relative doles out as much as a title and a name; to hold it back for half a century, till a noble stranger-lady, raising her voice from the grave, bids the deferred testimony take form, and arranges to defray the cost of it: still, even at that long end, there is the handiness of oneness, of completion, of passage off into the freeing and unburdening past. But John Kyrle has the far nobler, the far higher, the far more excelling monument, and had it from the first, that is ever springing out again in men's minds, with new planning, new proportions, new erection. Marble was in no way enough for him. He deserved imitation. And as Pope struck the note of this in 1733; as those honest bell-ringers clanged it out with becoming suppression,

when a whole hundred years had passed : so it has sounded again and again, at varying and unexpected intervals, and to-day has reached to a chord. The Kyrle Society, in no discharge of executor's duty, in no recognition of ties of blood, but simply because it admires Kyrle, is trying to emulate him, is trying to continue his work. If it can make roads and paths and seats and comely gateways, it will make them, clearing away pollution and labyrinth and uncomeliness to do so. If it can cheer the sick, not only with ' Miss Jude's' possets and ptisans and herb-teas, but with pleasant reading and pleasant singing, and pictures upon the walls, and kind words, and even with simply kind smiles, it will do it straight. If it hears of wrongs, it will try hard to redress them ; if it knows of sin, it will try to take the sin away ; if it knows that lives are lived that are all toil and painful penury, that are all coarseness and debasement, it will try to put beauty for ashes, to bring close down into the midst of it the first breathing of a higher life. In idleness to give the desire for work ; in profligacy to show it is

better to be pure ; by taking into misery a little joy ; by providing for unemployed hours some wholesome recreation ; in personal talk, in periodical assemblings, in loans of pieces of art, in lucid explanations of them, in the opportunity for music and drawing and innocent games ; by giving advice and warning, and the simple support of knowing there are friends to be gratified or grieved ;—the Kyrle Society hopes, through each one of its members, to leave the world the better for the life that has come to it, just as John Kyrle left the world the better for his. And that the Queen's son, his Royal Highness Prince Leopold, and the Queen's daughter, her Royal Highness the Princess Louise, should join the Society in these good endeavours, should take up the work with characteristic good sense, warmed with a fit proportion of characteristic enthusiasm, speaks well for the results the Society is likely to attain, and for the healthful spirit that has leavened this portion of the nineteenth century.

Interest will be felt in knowing the Kyrle motto. It is *Nil moror ictus*. Is it well, so ?

AMONG THE HEATHER.

A Highland Story.

BY A. C. HERTFORD.

CHAPTER XXI.

'There is something in the pleasures of the country that reaches much beyond the gratification of the eye; a something that invigorates the mind, that erects its hopes, that allays its perturbations, that mellows its affections.' ROBERTS.

THESE words were very true in connection with Norah at this time. Everything had been happily arranged for their visit to Buttercup Farm—Mr. and Mrs. Brown, those 'exceptionally honest people,' were quite pleased and ready to receive them; so, one fine afternoon, towards the end of October, Mrs. Grant, Norah, and Madge, stepping out of the train after their short journey from town, found themselves in the sweet fresh country, and a comical-looking little pony-carriage in readiness to take them to Buttercup Farm.

It was one of those unusually warm autumns when winter seems to have lost the train, and comes to us a few weeks later than usual, puffing and panting and making a great to-do to gain on lost time; when summer seems to be laughing at her rival's mistake, and coquettes and smiles, bribing the little birds to sing their loudest, making Nature look her fairest, seeming to us like a dear friend, who becomes ten times more dear, as we know we shall so soon be called to part from her. Who would not love the country at such a time? And Norah, although she had not felt any great desire for change when the proposal had

first been made, was now sure that she could not fail to return stronger and happier than she came.

They soon caught a glimpse of Buttercup Farm on the top of a little hill, the sweetest, most tempting-looking farmhouse imaginable. Old, rambling, white-washed, irregularly built; windows dotted about, regardless of distance, here and there and everywhere; a door to one side, covered with what would be in summer sweet honeysuckle flowers and climbing roses. On one side slanted away a large old-fashioned garden, and from this there opened out an orchard. At the door of the farmhouse stood Mrs. Brown, a little round ball of a dame, certainly wider than she was long, looking as if she thoroughly enjoyed and thrived on the produce of her land.

Good-nature itself was written on her jolly fat face, which looked as if nothing could disturb it. She beamed from ear to ear at sight of her guests, displaying a row of splendid white teeth. A comely dame was Madam Brown, despite her circumference. She welcomed her guests warmly, and, proposing to show them their rooms, at once led the way along little passages, up a few stairs, down again, up again, till Madge declared she would never be able to find her way out. At last their hostess threw open the door of a large cheerful sitting-room, furnished in old-fashioned comfortable style—plenty of fresh chintzes and clean

dimity curtains. On the wall hung the inevitable portraits of the Queen and Prince Consort in their young days, framed most massively, to do honour to the subjects, I suppose; and the equally inevitable print of the marriage of the Prince and Princess of Wales. Opposite to these works of art hung two oil-paintings, representing a stiff wooden lady in a constrained position, of a polished countenance, as if she had been cruelly exposed to the elements when a child; and a ditto ditto gentleman. Do not imagine that I wish to laugh unkindly at these pictures; I am only attempting to act art-critic, and point out the relative beauties of each.

In her right hand the lady (who represented Mrs. Brown) held a vegetable production, supposed to be a white rose—two or three white roses, if I mistake not; but the artist had cleverly contrived to blend the flowers in one; let us call it a bunch of white roses, then, and I believe they are moss-roses; yes, they are—very sentimental, truly. The lady's gaze is riveted on her bouquet, and there is an air of bewilderment in her expression, as if she were asking why she should be compelled to grasp so firmly this lovely cauliflower—I meant flower. Yes, that must be what the artist meant to depict, for she points with the rather stiff finger of her left hand at a particular peculiar rosebud. You see she is a lady of discrimination. The picture is all in unison, for observe the folds of her dress and tippet, they are as woodeny as her countenance—quite in keeping.

Opposite to this fair dame hangs her husband, Mr. Brown; he also has a polished face—probably like drew to like—he also holds something in his right hand

and points to it with his left. That is one charm of allowing the same artist to paint many members of your family, there is such restful composure in the similarity of position. What could be a sweeter idea, for instance, than the seven Flamboroughs, each with a fine orange? Let us examine this something in the hand of Mr. Brown. Is it—nay, it is *not* a vegetable production. Ah, how stupid! it is quite clear, after all. The venerable Brown is studying Magna Charta, of course; a very intellectual man, evidently; yes, that large document can be none other than the veritable Magna Charta; let us gaze on the picture with awe. But listen to Brown's faithful spouse; she is but now descanting on the portrait.

'Yes, miss,' to Norah, 'my old man, the very moral of him, beautiful I say it is. And I can just fancy the letter he's reading' (ah, then it was not Magna Charta, after all; what a pity!) 'is the one our Tom sent home from furrin parts, when first he went there' ('furrin parts' might be a town, from the way Mrs. Brown spoke of it). 'And that's me, miss, as no doubt you will have observed.

'Well, they be a rare relaxation to the nerves, be works of art, they be, and so I often says to Brown; but he hasn't a mind as is cultivated to care for such things, poor fellow, and never could see the likenesses. But I often comes in here, when I feels fagged and tired, and takes a look at 'em; they do seem to freshen one up a bit.'

After a pause, Mrs. Brown recommenced: 'Course the ladies play, and I am proud to say they needn't neglect the talent here! and stepping triumphantly to the faded little instrument, the happy possessor threw it open, and asked

if one of the young ladies would 'kindly strike an air.'

Good woman as she undoubtedly was, Mrs. Brown was certainly blessed with what is termed in Scotland 'the gift of the gab:' when once set off, she found it difficult to stop.

Norah good-naturedly complied, struck a chord or two, and could hardly refrain from a jump as she did so. Poor little tin kettle! certainly, whatever its past glories may have been, but few of them remained. She managed to conceal her feelings, however; and Mrs. Brown, perfectly satisfied, led the way to the adjoining bedrooms. Here everything might be honestly admired, from the pretty flowered hangings down to the posy-covered carpet to correspond. All looked most beautifully fresh and sweet after the smoke and dirt of London, and Madge flew from one new object to another, admiring and praising, looking as unlike the little invalid of a fortnight ago as possible.

After a few more remarks, hoping the young ladies and 'ma'am' would be comfortable, Mrs. Brown, the loquacious, quitted the rooms, saying she would hasten tea, as they must all be tired.

'I wonder where she keeps her husband,' said Madge, as she and her sister were left alone. 'He seems to be put entirely in the background.'

They soon found out that he was a weak old man, almost entirely tied to his chair with rheumatism. It was easy to see who was master at Buttercup Farm. But a good kind wife she made him too, the farm and house being infinitely better managed now than when her meek little lord and master held sway. She should have been the man, and

he the woman: their characters would have suited far better so.

When the girls again entered the sitting-room, the table was temptingly spread for tea, to which they felt inclined to do ample justice. After which, Madge, tired with the excitement of the day, was conveyed to bed by Norah, who soon followed her example. And thus happily ended the first evening at Buttercup Farm.

Many were the happy days that followed. What fun Norah and Madge had, being initiated into the mysteries of farm-life! and how knowing they soon became in it! Madge even went so far as to insist on milking a cow; and the good-natured Mrs. Brown stood by at the first experiment, laughing her fat self into fits, as Madge tried and tried, yet with no result; for the clever creature recognised a stranger at once, felt injured at her presumption, and finally ended by kicking Madge and her pail on one side, gently but decidedly. But nothing daunted, she would not be defeated; and being advised to try her hand on a more submissive cow, did so, and succeeded far better, soon becoming quite an expert in the great art of milking. Then the hens and poultry, what fun the feeding of them was! And last, though by no means least, what splendid rides she took on the small black pony! She was not strong enough to walk far yet; but many were the excursions she and Norah made with 'Trot' to help them on their way. Mrs. Grant was unable to bear much fatigue, and it was pleasure enough for her to see her girls return just in time for tea, with nice colours and healthy appetites, after some long walk along the lovely country roads,

with much to tell, and often much to show her.

Is there any meal in the country so delightful as high tea? Dinner is all very well in town; but in the country, with the fresh butter and eggs and cream, home-made bread perhaps, and cakes, and good things of all sorts, what can be so cosy as a regular 'rough tea'?

'Now stir the fire and close the shutters
fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa
round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing
urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the
cup
That cheers, but not inebriates, waits
on each—
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.'

How deliciously snug! You cannot fancy anything but love and contentment over such a meal. The most argumentative person must pause ere he ventures to bring tiresome discussion into such a peaceful scene; and a cross temper would feel itself quite out of place there. Many people who can plod steadily through a long dinner without enlivening it by one joke often become perfectly hilarious over high tea, so obstreperous does it make them; it is quite the meal for fun of all sorts. The teas during that fortnight at Buttercup Farm were as merry affairs as one could wish. Mrs. Grant often listened to Norah's laugh with a feeling of deep satisfaction, and saw with joy the colour stealing back into her cheek. Norah was truly trying to be resigned to whatever lot should be sent her; and the very act of utter resignation brought with it peace. But this was not acquired all at once. I would not that any one should imagine her a model girl; I do not believe in model girls, as the term goes, and should certainly never have cared to sit down

and write the story of one. Norah was much the same as other girls are; and sometimes it was very hard to keep sweet tempered when all within her seemed ready to rise into rebellion at a moment's notice and play the traitor to her late resolves. Mrs. Grant did not see her sometimes at night after Madge was asleep, when there was no human eye to see or human ear to hear, when, do what she would, her troubles and worries seemed all to rise without any encouragement and look her in the face. At such times it was very hard to fight them all alone. She had well-nigh forgotten that dream in the railway-carriage, it seemed so little likely to be fulfilled now; but she never could quite forget it, and the words, 'Did you not know I would come to you at last? Look up, my child, my love!' came at times across her memory like a soft refreshing breeze, and she could not quite give up the hope that the dream had perhaps been sent her as a sign.

Ah, Norah, my dear, listen:

'What studies please, what most delight
And fill men's thoughts, they dream
them o'er at night.'

True lines enough; yet there is not any reason against our believing, if we can, that certain dreams, either sad or bright, may sometimes come to prepare us for what is in the future. Almost every one, I think, has had some such dream in the course of his life, and probably mentioned it as a 'curious coincidence.' So it is; but may it not be something more besides?

One day Mr. and Miss Lewis drove down unexpectedly, and paid our friends at Buttercup Farm a call. Mr. Richard was in great triumph that he had been able to perform the journey in

his own carriage, without having being obliged to enter 'one of those confounded railways, ma'am.'

'Mary, my dear, tell Mrs. Grant if they are not confounded inventions.'

Miss Mary laughed gently as she answered,

'Dear Dick, why do you use such ugly expressions when you know you don't mean them? No, I don't think we need run the poor railways down, though I must say I much prefer travelling as we did to-day.'

They had put up at a little inn close by, and spent the evening with the Grants, leaving early next day. Mrs. Brown was in great excitement at sight of her old master and mistress, and insisted on waiting on the party herself at tea-time, most astonishingly arrayed in a cap of many colours and a bright purple gown; joining in the conversation at her own sweet will, her honest red face beaming all over with satisfaction. She kissed Miss Mary as she bade her good-bye next day, and there were tears in her eyes as she turned in from the door, and remarked to Mrs. Grant,

'They be rare and good, ma'am. When that good lady and gentleman die, they will go right flap to heaven; I see the wings a-growing now from between their pretty shoulders. They bean't publicans, ma'am' (Mrs. Brown probably meant pharisees), 'and don't care for the world to know all the good they do in it; but they'll get their reward above, and the biggest of gold harps will they have: of that me and Brown is certain. Deary me, I do become quite poetical sometimes, 'specially when the subjec' do touch me near the heart.'

The good woman wiped her

eyes with the corner of her large apron, and retired to feed her hens. Comically though she expressed herself, she had yet got to the root of the matter. I doubt if the *size* of the gold harps would have added, in any way, to the comfort of our little couple; but I think the very *sweetest* instrument would be given them.

Mrs. Brown, honest soul, was constantly trotting in and out, 'just to keep Mrs. Grant cheery when the young ladies were away,' as she expressed it, and to-day many were the praises of her old master and mistress that fell from her ready tongue.

'My Tom owes his life to them two, ma'am,' she observed; 'for he had left his father and mother, that's me and Brown, ma'am, who needed his help at the farm, thinking to better himself in London. First he wrote to us that he was getting on fast, and earning lots of money; but after a time he wrote seldomer, did our Tom, and soon not at all. And nothing could we hear of the poor chap, till we just told our sorrow to Mr. Richard; and if you'll believe it, ma'am, he just set to work himself and searched this way and that way, and for all that could find no trace of Tom; but he never gave up hope, and in a little while he wrote to us that he had found him. Poor boy! he hadn't written us the truth at all, for he had never earned any money since he left us; but wicked companions had got hold of him and tempted him to be as bad as themselves. But Mr. Richard, God bless him, found him just in time, rescued him from ruin, and set him on his feet again; he got him some work to do in furrin parts, where he is honest and happy, for he would never have settled at home here, would Tom, he had such a spirit.'

That's the story, ma'am; and you won't be surprised now that me and Brown knows for certain how big their gold harps will be up yonder, and how we looks forward to the time when we shall see 'em playing on 'em. That's to say, if we ever manages to get there ourselves. 'Course *we* shouldn't know what to do with harps, him and me, not being cultivated; but 'twill be rare and refreshing just to rest a bit and listen to them a-twanging so sweetly.'

Here was one heart giving its grateful testimony of what those two had done, and there were many others who could have told a similar story. Dear old couple! I am very loth to bid you good-bye, only, as you see, but few pages of my tale remain. Good-bye? Nay, may we not hope it is *au revoir*?

CHAPTER XXII.

'How the time
Loiters in expectation! Th-n the mind
Drags the dead burden of a hundred years
In one short moment's space. The nimble
heart
Beats with impatient throbs, sick of delay,
And pants to be at ease.' HAYARD.

A LONG motto for so short a chapter, you will say, and with truth. Geoffrey demands a few minutes of our time; and yet, at this period of his existence, poor fellow, he is not a very pleasant subject to write about; so, the shorter the chapter the better.

He is still with his friend in the country, popping away at the pheasants, though, by the way, he is not half such a good shot as usual. He tries to be interested in the sport, however; to be entertained and entertaining. But his friend, who has often spoken of Geoffrey in glowing terms to his wife, is disappointed in him,

for he is not appearing at all to advantage just now. He is absent and dull at times; and the wife thinks him rather a lump of a man, though she kindly refrains from expressing her opinion to her husband. Despite his anxiety to conceal his feelings, Geoffrey's eagerness each day, as the post comes in, does not escape observation. Will that letter from his mother, containing the decision of his fate, never arrive? His host twitted him on his manner at first, and asked, laughing, from whom he was so anxiously expecting a letter; but Geoffrey answered so shortly, 'From my mother,' that his friend was careful for the future to avoid the subject, and soon began to adopt his wife's opinion that Mr. Lindsay must be in love. 'Though if he speak truth, my dear, it must be with his mother.'

'Ah, so he says,' answered the shrewder wife.

Poor Geoffrey! this was a very trying time for him, and very hard work he found it to keep patient. I should be sorry to mention any of the names Percival was called just now; they were not few in number. Geoffrey had given him credit for being intensely selfish; but that his selfishness should reach such a pitch he could hardly imagine possible. That, knowing how trying the uncertainty must be, he should still delay answering, seemed almost incredible; yet such seemed to be the case. His hostess knew and liked him better afterwards, when she saw him under more auspicious circumstances; for what allowances must not be made for a man in love, particularly when that man is no longer a boy!

The true facts of the case were these. The letter Geoffrey had, some fortnight before, written and

himself posted, had duly arrived at Leicester's home. He being engaged in enjoying himself at one shooting after another, his mother re-addressed the note, and delivered it to a servant to post 'at once.' That gentleman slipped it into his pocket until such time as a stroll to the post should fall in with his feelings. Need we say that there it lay undisturbed and forgotten, till the necessity for its owner receiving it had long gone by? Then of course it was not worth while to confess his carelessness, thought the true delinquent; and the belief entertained by several people and never contradicted was, that this particular and important letter had somehow been lost on the way, 'through the carelessness of some of the Post-Office servants,' of course. Many are the letters that have met with a similar fate, and many are the sad consequences that have risen therefrom.

CHAPTER XXIII.

'A thought of joy, that rises in the mind,
Where sadness hath been sitting many
an hour;
A thought of joy that comes with sudden
power,
When least the welcome guest we looked
to find.' CALDER CAMPBELL.

ONCE more I must ask you to make a journey. Once more we must betake ourselves to Robin Lodge, where the Rosses still are; for they always stayed among the hills, till actually driven away by the winter cold.

Miss Duff is still there, now their only visitor. There are many ladies like her, who, when asked for a month, stay two; and when proposing a visit of a week or so, seem as if they never meant to take their departure at all. Miss Duff always felt that, once settled in a comfortable house, it was best

to remain there as long as she could. As she remarked now and then to her much-tried little niece, 'You see, child, once visitors come, I always think it best for them to stay some time. Constant comings and goings only worry the servants and create such confusing rumpus. Such are my principles, and I always try to act up to them.'

Fanny could not in politeness openly dissent, owing to those tiresome laws of hospitality; but she inwardly felt certain that her aunt might make what confusion she chose in departing, it could be nothing compared to what she created by remaining. The weather was growing colder now, and the days shorter; consequently the old lady was tied more to the house than formerly, and her nephew and niece grew proportionately tired of her society. She rarely read (except indeed when she felt in need of forty winks), but knitted all day long, morning, noon, and night. The occupation suited her to a nicety; it did not require close attention, and the eyes could roam pleasantly about while the fingers were busy. And O, how those eyes did take in every thread on the carpet, every speck on the furniture, every spot on Milly's little pinafore, and how the tongue proceeded to remark on them too! A pleasant lady for a six weeks' visit was Miss Duff, truly—so affable and easy!

It was post-time once more (we have been present several times when that bag was opened), and Mr. Ross had just divided its contents; one for each lady and several for himself. Fanny had a long effusion from Miss Tennant, and Miss Duff a note from her housekeeper.

'I do believe here's one from Leicester,' exclaimed Mr. Ross, as

he examined his budget: 'something extraordinary must have happened to make that young man write. I wonder what it is.'

'Open it, and you will see, my dear,' from his wife, who did not feel much interest in the subject; and not raising her eyes from her letter, she continued, 'perhaps he's going to be married.'

'Eh, what?' so suddenly exclaimed Miss Duff, that Fanny almost jumped in her chair, and Mr. Ross, glancing up, inquired, 'Is anything the matter, aunt?'

'No; but what was that I heard Fanny saying to you just now? that is what I want to know.'

'I was merely making a remark on a note Ned has just received from Mr. Leicester,' answered her niece, a trifle impatiently; for by this time she was thoroughly tired of the old lady and her peculiarities, and felt no desire to satisfy her curiosity at present.

Soon Mr. Ross made an exclamation of surprise, gave a little laugh, and handed the letter to his wife, saying, 'You were right, after all.'

She proceeded to peruse it with an amused face, and also laughed as she finished it. Miss Duff put on her spectacles, laid down her knitting, and watched her with open mouth and curious eyes.

'Bad manners, child; you should never laugh in company, unless others can join in the fun,' she observed, with exceeding crustiness.

Her niece felt the reproof a just one, and answered meekly,

'You are right, aunt; it was rude of me.'

'It certainly was.'

Fanny proceeded,

'But I am sure you are most welcome to any fun there is. Ned has just had a letter from

Mr. Leicester, and as he makes no secret of it, I may tell you that he is just engaged to be married. Great news, is it not?'

Miss Duff grew scarlet, rose suddenly from her chair, advanced till she stood in front of her nephew and niece, and exclaimed, with whole mountains of wrath in her voice,

'Great news, indeed! I should think so! I hope you are both happy now! You have landed yourselves in a pretty mess, and perhaps next time a lady so much older and more experienced than yourselves takes the trouble to advise you, you will be guided by her. At all events, *I* feel that *I* have done *my* duty in this matter!'

'My dear aunt, what idea *have* you taken into your head now?' inquired her nephew, who, at the beginning of her harangue, had looked annoyed; but that expression had soon given place to one of unmixed amusement. 'I fancy you have hit rather wide of the mark. Why should not Leicester get engaged if he chooses?'

'Speaking rather wide of the mark, am I? O, very well! You are marvellously polite to a stranger in your own house, Edward Ross; and if your conscience does not tell you that you have sanctioned and encouraged this engagement, you are a pagan, that's all! I should like to know what Mrs. Grant thinks of her future son-in-law, poor woman?'

Ned burst into a hearty laugh.

'O aunt Betsy, aunt Betsy, you're all wrong, all wrong—such a muddle as it is! Mrs. Grant has no son-in-law in prospect that I know of; and certainly no one can accuse me of encouraging this engagement; for I never even heard of Miss Garnet until this morning, so I am afraid I *must* plead guilty to being a pagan.'

Miss Duff quickly returned to her chair, cleared her throat, tried not to look in the least astonished, and remarked,

'Well, Edward, you certainly are extremely tartaric'—by which rather peculiar term she probably meant exasperating—'and I think you might have told me this sooner. However, I suppose people *may* make mistakes sometimes. I must say I think you showed very bad manners to laugh in that vulgar fashion.'

Ned laughed again.

'My dear aunt, I was not making fun of you, but at the idea of my having encouraged this engagement, when I had not even met the young lady.'

'I am sure I am sorry I ever came to this house, Edward Ross,' said Miss Duff, making, with dignity, for the door, which she always did when worsted in her arguments.

Her nephew heartily echoed her wish, though not aloud. As soon as the door closed he said,

'I wonder if aunt Betsy means that she is about to leave? I begin to think that she has taken up her abode here for good. Now, Fanny, my dear, you see I was right; Geoffrey and Norah may be mated still; I told you so.'

'Yes, Ned, so you did. I wonder now if Percival really proposed to Norah here. She is a little monkey if he did; for I should never have guessed it. If so, he has got over his refusal marvelously quickly.'

'Once more, I told you so. He was madly in love with her here; but would be just as madly in love with the next pretty girl he met. Yes, I should fancy he did get refused while here; what a pity aunt Betsy should not know of it! I think Geoffrey would be the very opposite in this respect, and I should not much care to see

him after he had been refused by the girl he loved.'

'Well, I wish he would come forward now; I am sure, from several things I noticed, that he likes Norah, and I don't fancy he would be rejected. I can't help thinking that he imagined there was some understanding between her and Percival. Ned, *wouldn't* Mr. Lindsay and Norah make a charming couple?'

'So you remarked on the night of her arrival, my love; and, if you remember, my objections on the score of age were instantly squashed. I have intended writing to Lindsay for some time, and now shall do so of course without delay.'

'Stay, Ned; how are you going to set about it?' interposed his wife, as he moved towards his desk. 'You must not let him imagine for one moment that you are writing on purpose. Only mention it in the course of your letter quite in a casual way, you know.'

'How women do beat about the bush, to be sure—even the best of them! I don't see why I should be casual at all! Listen; wouldn't something like this do perfectly?—"Dear Lindsay, just heard this minute some news which I am sure you will be glad to know, therefore I lose no time in telling you of it—Leicester is engaged to a Miss Garnet," &c. Now what could be better than that?'

'Nothing could possibly be worse, Ned. I did flatter myself you had a little sense. The idea of sending such a note to a proud reserved man like Mr. Lindsay! Why don't you take my advice, and only bring in the news in the course of your letter? No, I *won't* compose it for you;' as her husband looked up perplexed and beseechingly. 'Your aunt could

write it better than you, I believe. I have a good mind to call her down,' added Fanny mischievously.

Her husband looked alarmed.

'For pity's sake leave her alone just now, or you will effectually drive the few remaining ideas out of my head. Now tell me once more how I am to put it.'

'Don't be stupid, dear; use your brains and think for yourself. Say something about the weather, and then about his mother's health (that ought to come first, by the bye); and then—'

"First they talked about nothing at all, And then they talked of the weather,"

interrupted Mr. Ross, laughing, as he lay back in his chair, and balanced his pen.

'Don't be disrespectful,' reprimanded his wife severely, 'or no more help shall you get from me! Then you must remark on what sport you have had, and inquire about his. After you have comfortably filled a page or two in a natural way, you may bring in about Percival; not before, remember. You needn't sigh so; that's pure affectation. You must, and can, write this letter properly; and I shall leave you alone to do so, as I must go to the nursery for a little while; so you won't be disturbed, and will have no excuse;' and dropping a kiss on her husband's puckered forehead as she passed him, Fanny quitted the room.

It was some time before she returned; for soon after she reached the nursery Miss Duff entered it, and there began a long argument on the shape of Milly's pinafores, to which Fanny had patiently to listen. So by the time she regained the drawing-room Mr. Ross had finished his correspondence, evidently to his satisfaction, for he was reclining comfortably in an armchair studying the *Times*.

'Good boy,' said his wife approvingly; 'so you have finished your letter. I knew you could do it perfectly if you chose.'

'It didn't take so long to write, after all; I just followed your advice, and put what you told me. I left it open for you; there it is;' and Mr. Ross returned to his paper with an air of conscious virtue, and was soon engrossed in a leading article. A sudden exclamation from Fanny made him look up.

'Ned, did you mean this for fun?'

'Fun, my dear! I should think not. Most serious earnest, I can assure you. Why?'

'Because I am perfectly ashamed of you, perfectly.'

'Can't see the reason, I must confess,' began Mr. Ross, though looking a trifle anxious. 'I put exactly what you told me, and thought it sounded remarkably nice.'

'Very nice, really,' returned Fanny scornfully, yet laughing heartily as she spoke. 'Just listen now, while I read it:

"Robin Lodge,
October 29th, 187—."

"Dear Lindsay,—I have put off writing to you from day to day, till I must do so no longer, so here goes. I hope Mrs. Lindsay is enjoying pretty good health; I am sure this fine weather must suit her. Pray remember me to her. What shooting have you had lately? here the birds are now of course very wild. I heard some news by this morning's post which I now hasten to impart to you, as I know you will be delighted. Leicester writes to say he is just engaged to a Miss Garnet, whom he met, for the first time, after leaving us. There is nothing to wait for, so they are to be married before the new

year. Quick work, is it not? Have you seen anything of Miss Grant lately? I hear her sister is almost well again.—Believe me yours ever, EDWARD ROSS."

Have you been listening, Ned?

'To every word of it.'

'And can't you see how absurdly you have put it?'

'Really, my dear,' said poor Mr. Ross, 'I can't see that it is so much amiss. I wrote all you told me, and even added a little; it sounds rather well on the whole, I think. You never told me to remember myself to the old lady, and you see I did.'

'Yes, and forgot all about me,' interposed Fanny, laughing. 'O Ned, Ned, your son will soon beat you in the art of composing! You certainly are very stupid, and if you wrote me as silly letters as that when we were engaged, I wonder how ever I consented to marry you. I am afraid my love must have been very blind.'

Ned moved once more to his desk. 'Come, little woman, you must really compose it for me, or Geoff will certainly never get this by to-morrow. Let's see, this is Friday: if he doesn't hear to-morrow, he will have to wait till Monday.'

Mr. Ross drew a chair very near his own, and Fanny came to occupy it.

'All the same, Ned, I am ashamed of you.'

Their two combined intellects managed to concoct a respectable letter; and, till the whole of the first three pages were comfortably filled, the resolute Fanny would allow no mention of the engagement to be made. Then, just before closing, Ned was told to write, 'By the bye, I heard some news from our friend Leicester to-day, which it may perhaps interest you to know: he has just

got engaged to a Miss Garnet,' &c. As they finished the letter Miss Duff reëntered the room; she sniffed about, evidently anxious to know what they had been writing, and, as she saw her nephew about to close the envelope, remarked,

'Have you been writing to congratulate Mr. Leicester, Edward?'

'O no, aunt! I am not in quite such a hurry as all that. No, I was merely writing a short note to my friend Geoffrey Lindsay.'

'Humph! one of the few estimable young men I know.'

And as thus we have at last a pleasant speech to record of Elizabeth Duff, spinster, let us bid her farewell, lest if we wrote more concerning her it might have to be something slightly 'tartaric,' as she would herself express it. Say good-bye kindly, for after all, poor soul, she is her own worst enemy. She has made herself lonely and sad, and has lost the road to happiness, simply because she would not ask the way at the proper place. I have purposely introduced into this little story two unmarried ladies of much the same age, with pretty equal chances of happiness. The one made use of them, the other did not. There may be many harder fates than living all our lives and at last dying 'an unmarried lady;' but may we ever be preserved from becoming 'an elderly spinster'!

It is for us now to follow that letter, which had taken so long to compose. It was duly delivered in Porchester-terrace next morning, and Mrs. Lindsay, looking almost as eagerly as her son for that other expected letter from Scotland, sighed as she turned this one over with a disappointed air, and recognised the post-mark. Being a methodical old lady, she

lost no time in re-directing the note, and something put it into her head to take an early walk and post it herself. Afterwards she would drive to Addison-gardens and inquire when the Grants were expected home; which things she accordingly did, and then spent the day as best she could, by herself. When there are only two members in a family, the absent *one* is sadly missed; and though Mrs. Lindsay longed for the attainment of her son's happiness, she sighed sometimes and wondered how she should get on when Geoff married, for that he would marry she had quite made up her mind. The day passed, and, according to her custom, Mrs. Lindsay was preparing early to retire to bed, when the door-bell rang. It was not a very usual occurrence in this quiet household, and a sudden fear struck her, had anything gone wrong with her boy? But the next minute the door was opened, and—yes—that was Geoffrey's voice asking if his mother was still up.

'What is it, Geoff?' she asked anxiously, as she met him on the stairs. 'Nothing has gone wrong, has there?'

'Come in here, mother; I want to speak to you,' he answered, drawing her into the room she had just quitted. 'O mother, it has come at last!'

'What has, dear boy?' she inquired very gently, almost afraid to put the question; for Geoffrey had sat down on the nearest seat and buried his face in his hands, and she saw the broad shoulders heaving as the strong man almost sobbed. 'What is it, Geoffrey? Tell me, my son.'

Geoffrey looked up, ashamed of his momentary weakness.

'Mother, I cannot help it; it is the relief that has unmanned me. O mother, the answer has come,

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though not as I expected it. I may ask Norah to be my wife, now. Thank God, this wearing uncertainty is over!' and he related to his mother what we know already, all the contents of Edward Ross's letter. After all, Fanny need not have spent so much time and trouble over the wording of it—the simple facts were enough.

'And so, mother, the letter reached me this evening just before dinner, and I think I rather startled the household by announcing my intention of leaving by the last train. When I told them you were not ill, and that I had heard no bad news, but simply was wanted at home, I fancy they set me down as rather mad. But I don't care what the whole world thinks, I feel so light of heart. I know the most difficult part is still to come; but I can face that boldly now this wretched indecision is over, and I shall learn my fate one way or the other. I must see Norah to-morrow, mother.'

'But, my boy, they are not home yet. I called to inquire to-day, and they are not expected till Wednesday.'

'I can't help it, mother; you have their country address, and I will go there; I cannot wait.'

'But not to-morrow, dear boy; it is Sunday, you know.'

'I had almost forgotten it *was* Sunday; all but the one thing seems to have gone out of my head. But it's all the same, mother; "the better the day, the better the deed," you know. I *must* ask her to-morrow.'

'Go, then, dear Geoff; I know you will always do right, and take your mother's blessing with you, if you will have it; for remember that, whether you succeed (and I believe you will) or not, it goes with you wherever you are.'

FF

CHAPTER XXIV.

'On Sunday heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and rife.'

HERBERT.

'After long storms, and tempests over-
blowne,
The sun at length his joyous face doth
cleare,
So, when as Fortune all her spight hath
showne,
Some blisful houres at last must needs
appeare.'

SPENSER.

It was a glorious day, this last Sunday in October 187—, as glorious as its many forerunners had been. Regular Sunday weather. The very animals about the farm seemed to be impressed with it, and held meetings under the windows, before Mrs. Grant or her daughters were yet awake. The sunlight shining into her room woke Norah; and her senses, gradually returning, reminded her that this was the last Sunday at Buttercup Farm. Last days anywhere, especially where we have been happy, are generally sad. One begins to wonder if the time can ever be repeated, if we shall ever enjoy ourselves so much again; and it is seldom that one does, in quite the same way. So Norah lay and wondered. Yet she had a longing for home, too; there were certain attractions in London at present, which the country could not afford. So, when Madge presently inquired, 'Isn't it sad that this should be our last Sunday, Norah? don't you wish that we could stay on here always?' it was not to be wondered at that the answer was not quite so warm as her sister desired. By and by they walked down to the village church—a dear little picturesque building. Outside and all around lay the quiet churchyard, carefully kept and tended, for

'There the yew,
Green even amid the snows of winter,
told
Of immortality, and gracefully

The willow, a perpetual mourner, drooped;
And there the woodbine crept about,
And there the ancient ivy.'

Such was the little churchyard; and many were the queer inscriptions on some of the old tombstones, which Madge liked so much to decipher. She was naturally a wonderfully bright child, happy as the day was long; yet such a place as this seemed to have no sadness for her, and she would sometimes speak of death in a way that made Norah's heart tremble. It was this she had meant when speaking of her to Fanny as almost an angel-child; and she had therefore felt sure she must die. But I think she was wrong; for if none of such children were allowed to grow up into men and women, what would become of the poor world? and I fancy we need angels to walk the earth too much for them all to be early taken from us. Yet, as Norah watched her little sister stepping brightly from one small grave to another, and remembered how nearly, how very nearly, she had lost her, she could bear it no longer.

'O Madge, come away, dear; it makes me so sad to see you here. Come, mother.'

Madge looked up surprised, as her ear caught the tremor in her sister's voice; but Mrs. Grant knew the reason for it, and gently saying, 'Yes, darling, come away now,' together they left that quiet churchyard.

So the day wore peacefully on, brightly and happily, as such days should. After their early dinner, Mrs. Grant, feeling tired, lay down to rest, and the girls, thinking it too beautiful a day to be spent indoors, repaired to the garden. Great friends these two sisters were; until quite lately the one had hardly a thought which the other did not share. Now there

were *some* subjects on which Norah could not speak; but not knowing of these, Madge did not desire to hear of them. They met Mrs. Brown in the garden, come to have a Sunday glance round at her property, and see how the winter vegetables were progressing.

'And so you're bent on leaving me on Wednesday, young ladies,' she remarked; 'pity you should go so soon, just when missy was learning to milk the cow so nicely;' and the good woman began to laugh again at the remembrance of Madge's first experiment. 'Well, you've certainly finer roses in your cheeks than when you first came down; rare and pale you were then, and no mistake, so me and Brown remarked to each other. And you too, miss,' she continued to Norah, 'you were as white as a lily; nursing did that, I suppose?'

'Yes, nursing me,' answered Madge eagerly, 'nursing tiresome me, Mrs. Brown, when I never was worth so much trouble, I am sure.'

'Well, the country be a cure for everything, say I; 'tis good for mind as well as body. Why, I should go right flop mad if I had to spend my days in your great noisy town, my dears. No wonder folk suffer from such terrible headaches there, when, if you say a word to any one, they can't hear your question, and you can't hear their answer.'

Mrs. Brown had somewhat exaggerated views of London life, it seemed. She continued,

'No, miss, I've lived all my days in the fresh country air, for when I served Mr. Lewis it was in the country, and so has Brown; we are growing old in it, and till we gets to our home above, I hopes as we may stay here. I 'spects 'twill be more country life

than town in heaven. What do you say, miss?'

Norah smiled at the queer question, rather anxiously put, and answered that at all events it would be happiness, so Mrs. Brown need not trouble herself about the matter.

'Well, nor I do, miss; only you see, as one gets older, one can't help just imagining things a bit; and Brown, he can't be very far from his long home now, being a sight over the threescore years and ten. He kind of likes to hear my opinion on the subject, and I thought that maybe young ladies like you might have some pretty new fancies. I can't help thinking that I'd be given some garden work to do up there, for sure it would make me happiest. Don't we hear of angels with palms in their hands, miss? Well, they must require tending, surely; and maybe I might be allowed to do that. And Brown—well, I don't just know what he'd miss most, unless it be his newspaper. Course, for cultivated ladies like you there would always be the harps. But lor', and the good woman began to laugh, 'just to listen to me a-supposing things like this, when no doubt it's all arranged spic and span. I don't fancy heaven means idleness, do you, miss? else I know I could never be happy there, not being accustomed to it; unless I was sent bad rheumatism like poor Brown, just to prepare me a bit first. But it don't matter, after all; as you said truly, miss, we shall all be rare and happy, and that's the great thing. But, dear me! here I stand a-chattering idly, and there's Brown as ought to have his medicine; so good-afternoon, ladies;' and Mrs. Brown departed to attend to her little husband's wants. Unlike many great talkers, she was also a great worker.

'Well, Norah, that is the very funniest talk about heaven that I ever heard! Fancy thinking about gardening and reading the newspapers there!' observed Madge, as they continued their walk after Mrs. Brown's departure.

'She only thinks of happiness there, dear, from what makes it for her here; a very natural feeling. I suspect we all do the same, Madge. What do you imagine it?'

'O, I don't know, Norah: I only think of having you and mother and people I love there; I don't think much about the rest. Norah, I hope you will not get married for ever so long; I could not bear you to go far away; promise you won't, now.'

Norah could not keep from laughing at the rather peculiar request.

'Make your mind easy, dearie,' she said; 'I don't think it is likely we shall be parted just yet, at all events;' and after a pause she added, 'Why, Madge, you would like to come and visit me in a little house of my own, would you not? Long visits you should pay me then.'

'I don't know,' responded Madge doubtfully; 'you see, it would depend so much on whom you married. He might not care for me, you know. Norah, promise me, at any rate, you won't marry any one who would dislike me.'

Norah laughed, and promised; then thought it wisest to turn the conversation, saying,

'I think we are having a very silly talk, don't you? so let us choose another subject.'

They walked down to a little summer-house at the end of the garden that 'Brown' had erected for his lady in days gone by, when he had first brought her to Buttercup Farm, and chatted on, enjoying the delicious autumn after-

noon. There we may leave them for a little while, and return to Mrs. Grant.

She lay back on her sofa, thinking of many things. Feelings of thankfulness for Madge's recovered health came first. It would have been very hard to give up another of her darlings; *how* hard she only knew, now that the treasure had been spared her. And then her thoughts passed to Norah: she saw with satisfaction how much stronger and happier she looked; and yet she knew that matters were not yet all right in that quarter. Sometimes, when Norah was unconscious of being watched, and supposed her mother busy with a book, the latter was furtively watching her, and would see the work laid down, a far-away expression come into the eyes, and a sad expression steal over the little face. Then she would notice Norah take up her work again, sometimes with a quiet sigh, and go on as before; and her heart would feel very heavy for her little daughter's troubles, though only by extra tenderness could she show her sympathy. As she lay thus, thinking many thoughts, a footstep sounded on the gravel walk in front, and supposing it to belong to honest Mrs. Brown, she paid no attention to it; but a moment afterwards there came a knock at the door, and the good woman herself announced,

'A gentleman, ma'am, to see you.'

Mrs. Grant looked up surprised, and there stood Geoffrey!

Ah, well, I think the mother's heart understood it all then, and Geoffrey's rather confused explanations were not much needed. He had a little talk with her nevertheless, which certainly made him feel happier than he had ever felt before. Presently, and very soon, for Mrs. Grant was anxious

not to delay her child's happiness, she rose, saying she would fetch Norah, who was somewhere in the garden.

'No, let me go: I shall soon find her,' said Geoffrey eagerly.

'I think you had better not, for Madge is with her,' and Mrs. Grant looked up with a laugh in her eye. 'I promise you shall not have long to wait,' she added, as she closed the door, leaving her visitor to tramp restlessly up and down the room, and to think every minute that elapsed an hour at least.

Mrs. Grant made her way to the garden, smiling happily to herself, and presently caught sight of the girls seated in the old summer-house.

'So you've come out, after all, mother,' said Norah. 'You look quite fresh and rested; come and sit down.'

'Yes, I will rest here for a minute if you don't mind the trouble of running into the house for my shawl, dear. I left it in the sitting-room, and it's rather chilly without it.'

'I'll go, mother,' and Madge was starting off; but Mrs. Grant laid her hand so decidedly on her arm that she looked up astonished.

'Norah will get it, dear;' and Norah went. She remembered afterwards how strangely her mother had smiled as she spoke, and how lovingly she had looked at her.

As for the rest, I only know that she walked up the path, humming a little air, and passed into the house; that as she reached the sitting-room door some one stood there who held out his hand to her without a word; that together they entered the room, and that the door was shut very decidedly behind them.

What passed between them there is no business of either yours

or mine, but if you like, you may imagine it for yourselves; the wooden lady with the flowers, and the ditto gentleman with *Magna Charta*, can enlighten you if you ask them.

But I know that little Madge grew very impatient, and offered repeatedly to fetch the shawl herself; also that she got more and more puzzled as each time her mother refused, in an absent sort of way, saying that she was not cold now, that they would walk up and down and wait till Norah came back. And after a time—such a long time it seemed—Norah did appear, but not alone; for Geoffrey brought her proudly down to the little summer-house, and, holding out his hand to Mrs. Grant, said, O, so gladly,

'It's all right; will you take me for your son?'

She could not refuse, you know; and then Madge had to be won over. She looked doubtful at first; but when Norah put her arms round her and whispered, 'Darling, you know I promised I would only marry some one who would love you dearly, and here he is,' she gave in, accepted Geoffrey very civilly as a brother, and received graciously from him a brother's kiss.

Then they all walked back to the house; and Mrs. Brown, observing them from her parlour-window, remarked to her husband,

'I wonder now, Brown, who that good-looking gentleman is! He arrived this afternoon quite promiscuous like; for I let him in myself. And Mrs. Grant she were resting; but when I gave the name she started up in a tremendous hurry, and looked first surprised and then as pleased as Punch. Don't fancy he's any relation; for there don't be any family likeness as I can make out.'

Brown, whose rheumatism had not crippled his mental faculties, made answer :

'My dear, he don't need to be a relation now ; but it strikes me he will be before long. Don't you remember, Mary, the day I spoke to you over the stile ?'

'Gracious, Brown, so that's your opinion !' and the good lady sank back in her chair utterly amazed.

As the church-bells began to ring for evening service, Geoffrey said a little shyly, 'Are any of you going to church this evening ? Norah, shall you and I ?' And of course Norah answered 'Yes.' So together they wended their way to the little ivy-covered church, where, if the service had seemed peaceful this morning, how ten times more so did it now ! I think that neither of them ever repeated the thanksgiving prayer so heartily before. The goodness and loving kindness seemed very, very great just now ; and to the many blessings of this life one more, the greatest of all, had been added. Strangely enough, when the old clergyman had mounted the pulpit and opened his Bible, the words of his text were these : 'Let us love one another ; for love is of God.'

And as Geoffrey and Norah walked home under the starry sky, something moved her to tell him her dream—that strange dream she had had, it seemed, so long ago now ; and Geoffrey answered :

'My darling, I was ready ; so ready to help you with that burden if I had thought you wanted me. And you have had to wait on the cold hill-side all this time, my little Norah.'

And as she felt his strong arm round her, she answered brightly :

'Yes, Geoffrey ; but I don't need to think about it any more now. You see the sun *was* shin-

ing behind a cloud, after all ; it has appeared once more. And I am not at all afraid of its turning out the lamp in the railway-carriage,' she added, laughing, as they reached the farm.

CHAPTER XXV.

'Give me next good, an understanding wife,

By nature wise, not learned by much art ;

Some knowledge on her side will all my life

More scope of conversation impart,
Besides her inborn virtue fortify.

They are most firmly good that best know why.

As good and wise ; so be she fit for me ;
That is to will, and not to will the same.

My wife is my adopted self, and she

As me ; so what I love, to love must frame ;

For when, by marriage, both in one concur,

Woman converts to man, not man to her.'—SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

THE next morning Geoffrey returned to his mother. Norah walked with him to the station, saw him depart with a bright face, and retraced her steps to the farm.

Madge, being a child of some discrimination, had carefully kept out of the way this morning until Geoffrey and her sister had started. After they had left some time, she determined to go and meet Norah, knowing well that on the return journey her company would be acceptable enough.

It is rather a trying time to the relations of a young lady when she first becomes engaged. The very love that makes us rejoice at her happiness must make us a trifle sad when we think that, from henceforth, her old affection for us must come second. We know well that it does not decrease ; only another love, quite separate from it, comes quietly in, pushes us gently on one side, and asserts its own superiority. Madge

felt something of this as she strolled slowly on towards the railway-station. She was puzzling her little brains over a problem that wiser heads than hers have failed to solve. How was it that her sister should, without any hesitation, bestow her love on this comparative stranger, while she, Madge, should suddenly find another enthroned in the place in Norah's heart which hitherto she had held? Her brows were puckered and her face troubled as she walked on, with eyes so bent on the ground that Norah was standing face to face with her before she knew it. Then she looked up and smiled; for her sister seemed so thoroughly, so intensely happy, she felt she must be cheerful too.

'How good of you to come and meet me, Madge!' said Norah, putting her arm within her sister's. 'I was just wishing you would, when I caught sight of you; for since this tiresome Mr. Lindsay made his appearance I have hardly spoken a word to you.'

The next minute she regretted those last words; for Madge's eyes filled with tears as she said rather huskily,

'O Norah, it will not make any difference, will it? you won't let it?'

'Any difference, dear? Do you mean in my love for you? O Madge, what could put such ideas into your head? I will tell you the only difference it shall make. I will love you ten times more, my little sister.'

Madge's face brightened.

'Really, truly, Norah?'

'Of course, darling. Why, Madge, you will have just twice as much love as before; for Geoffrey' (and the name came shyly still) 'is prepared to be very fond of his new sister. Will you not be pleased to have a brother, dear?'

'Well, now I think of it, I suppose I shall,' and the last shadow vanished from Madge's face; 'but I should not have liked you to marry any one else, Norah.'

'You won't be asked to like any one else,' laughed her sister, 'so I suppose I may consider I have your approval; and very soon, Madge, I think you will be able to spare your brother a little of the love you give me. I can assure you he is far the more deserving of it.'

Madge gave an expostulatory growl.

'I think I *shall* get to like him, but you don't need to run yourself down; it won't make a bit of difference,' and she gave the arm she held a loving squeeze.

So Norah felt satisfied, as well she might. Her cup of happiness was full, even to overflowing, and it only seemed the greater for the trials that had gone before. She could see now that there had not been one too many. 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder,' and though it was beginning to feel very fond when she and Geoffrey were together, she knew that the love she bore him now was ten times deeper, stronger, more womanly than it had been before. It had been tried and had stood the test.

She and her mother had a long confidential talk that night after Madge had gone to bed, when all the hopes and fears of the last two months, and all the happy dreams of the future—that hazy future, which seemed to Norah just now so full of every possible joy—were openly poured into that loving ear. Many years ago the mother had had just such bright dreams for herself, when her future had seemed as full of sunshine and promise as did her little daughter's now; and, though there had come sorrows, she had never

pictured them, troubles sometimes treading close behind the joys. Yet, looking back now, she could still calmly say, 'It is well;' and she would not have had her child's thoughts one shade less bright to-night; for surely we may enjoy the sunshine, and even look on into what seems so bright beyond, provided only that, when the sun goes down, we still try to walk faithfully on in the shade 'till the day break, and the shadows flee away.'

Norah looked up somewhat wistfully into her mother's face.

'Mother, tell me how to make Geoffrey a good wife. You know all about it, and I have everything to learn still.'

Mrs. Grant smiled as she gently stroked the little head at her knee, and answered,

'I think, my darling, the best guide you can have will be love. True love, you know, Norah; not blind worship. The day before I was married my mother advised me to learn by heart some words of Jeremy Taylor's. I did, and have never forgotten them, though I fear I have not always remembered to act up to them. Shall I repeat them to you now, Norah?'

'Do, mother, please.'

And still looking tenderly down at the little face, Mrs. Grant repeated slowly and gently:

"A good wife is Heaven's last best gift to man; his angel and ministers of graces innumerable; his gem of many virtues; his casket of jewels. Her voice is sweet music; her smile his brightest day; her kiss the guardian of his innocence; her arms the pale of his safety, the balm of his health, the balsam of his life; her industry his surest wealth; her

economy his safest steward; lips his faithful counsellors; bosom the softest pillow of his cares; and her prayers the ablest advocates of Heaven's blessings on his head."

And here we must leave Norah, with all the future lying bright before her. We may just add that, on reaching home again, she received a mother's kiss and welcome from kind old Mrs. Lindsay; that Madge's love was soon entirely won by the new brother; that many were the warm congratulations Norah received from friends far and near; and that numerous were the presents which came pouring in as substantial marks of their affection. Miss Duff even remembered to send her a large pincushion, neatly filled with the sharpest of pins, which every one thought very characteristic of the giver.

So many people have written descriptions of weddings, that I shall not attempt to add to the number: suffice it to say that, before many months were over, a wedding-party did leave that home in Addison-gardens; that one fine morning Norah left it a maiden to return a wife; and that many were the prayers and good wishes which attended the opening of Mrs. Lindsay's married life.

And now, reader, you and I must part.

It has been a great pleasure to write of those dear Highland hills; for I can look back to many happy days spent 'among the heather;' and am glad to have thus been able to pay my small tribute of affection to them.

Good-bye!





MY OPPORTUNITY.

LONDON SOCIETY.

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ROMANTIC STORIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION: THE HEIRESS OF WARLOW CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE great Warlow Castle estate, as most people know, extends some fifteen miles along the shore of a northern county, and at one point goes back some fifteen miles into the interior. It is a small principality in itself. It comprises one or two towns, seven or eight villages, mountain land, rich pastures and arable lands, and the remains of an extensive forest. Beneath the surface of this wide expanse lie immense coalfields, whose area and approximate depth have been ascertained by competent scientific authorities. Not a single load has been carried away, although sometimes it outcrops from the surface; for the owners of this great estate have no desire that the picturesque should be exchanged for the profitable. Still it is a comfort to know that, when our present coal-mines are burned out, there are yet stores in reserve that may help to keep old England warm. Warlow Castle itself is an old historical edifice. It is mentioned in the local histories, and has its place also in the history of England. Its beacon-tower is a landmark to the shipping of the three kingdoms as the vessels traverse the Irish Channel. The castle

was formerly of immense extent; and for many generations it had been left in a state of ruin, until twenty years ago one portion of it had been rendered habitable and had been appropriately fitted. The great hall, which reminded one of a college-hall at Oxford or Cambridge, had been rendered impervious to rain and wind. It was too large for use, except for a Christmas wassail, or for some public festivity, as when visited by the British Archaeological Society. A portion of the thick walls was washed by the rising tide, and at high water presented a very imposing appearance. On the west there was a little bay, in which a rude kind of breakwater had made a primitive harbour, where, now and then, some fishing craft would find refuge in rough weather. Eastward there was a delicious little creek with a sandy beach. There was a wood with cunning paths cut through it, and a noble walk over the cliffs. In the grounds there was a famous mineral grotto, glittering with a thousand dyes from the cut and polished stones. There was good shooting over the home-farm and for thousands of acres beyond. The least ruined part of the old castle had been made habitable and turned into a shoot-

ing-box. It was small, indeed, compared with the original structure; but it had some noble rooms overlooking the ocean on one side, forest and moorland on the other.

Warlow Castle was the old seat of the Warlows; but it was not their regular residence. It was too old, decayed, and limited for that. Warlow Park, some fifteen miles off, at the extremity of the estate, was their country seat. The family had also a town-house in a West-end square. If the castle exhibited the archaic and historical side of the Warlow family, the park showed the modern and luxurious side. The panels of the drawing-room were painted by Turner himself; the walls were brilliant with pictures fresh from the Exhibition of the Royal Academy. And such stables and such kennels! You only wished that Hodge and his brethren on the estate were lodged half as warmly and completely. The castle was famous for its old armory, the park for its picture-gallery and its library. The library was especially a luxurious room, and almost an equal to the library of the Athenæum Club. Here, when the season was over, great fashionable parties used to assemble; and the wit, music, and laughter of London parties were prolonged till the advent of Christmas, and often till the meeting of Parliament.

Yet there were rumours to the effect that there was a skeleton, of a very special sort, in the private cupboard of Philip Warlow, Esq., M.P. for the western division of the county. He was a prosperous man, with a large family of big handsome children emerging into manhood and womanhood. But there were sinister rumours in the air; some, indeed, of a very vague character, but others that partook of a precise

and determinate form. Certain it was that a generation ago the title and estates had parted company. The baronet, three degrees removed, old Sir Anthony Warlow, had quarrelled with his eldest son. It was a trick peculiar to that family, but by no means confined to that family. There was no entail, and the eldest son was disinherited. We may be quite sure that it was about money or about a woman, the two primal causes of most of the mischief going on in the world. Then a certain settlement of the estates was made by the morose baronet. The eldest son was left with what might come to him out of his mother's jointure. Then the estates themselves were settled in a peculiar fashion. The process may be thus described: The estates were left to A, and failing A to B, and failing B to C, and failing C to D, and failing D to E, and failing E to F, and failing F to G. Beyond G (that is to say, beyond the seventh name) the settlement of the estates did not extend. A, in this case, was the baronet's second son, B was his brother, C was his nephew, D was another nephew, and so on. There was a very remarkable feature about this settlement of the estates which alone might have been provocative of litigation. After A had enjoyed them they were to go, not to the children of A, but to B; and after B, to C; and so on, for the next succeeding letters.

Some legal doubt was thrown on this very extraordinary kind of settlement. Of course A would have a very natural desire that the property should go to his own children. But A, though married, had no children; and he had been quite contented with saving largely for the widgw. When he died it was found that B, C, D, and E had all died in his lifetime, being

soldiers in the Crimean war. E had a large family, about nine children. The extraordinary thing was that they all died off like sheep in a dry-rot. Scarletina thinned the nursery; the son of the house was killed in the hunting-field; another grown lad, a midshipman in the royal navy, died of yellow-fever in the West Indies. Of the whole family of children not one survived to cheer the desolated old age of the parents. Then the old women in the neighbourhood—of both sexes—began to shake their heads. There was no blessing in the possession of estates which debarred the lawful heir of his rights. Lord Burleigh, with his celebrated shake of the head, was a mere fool to them. F died, leaving two daughters. It was confidently expected that the two daughters of F would contest the right of the next person in the settlement to oust them from the property. Nevertheless they did nothing of the kind. Perhaps they had been 'squared' by G. Perhaps, being weak-minded females, they were afraid a curse would alight upon them, and they would die off in case they entered upon possession of the property. Perhaps they had been left sufficiently well-off by their father, and did not care to risk the chances of litigation. Anyhow the park and the castle, with the large intervening estates, came quietly into possession of G. He was quite an old man when this happened, and had a grown-up son with a young family. G soon died, and his son reigned in his stead, and became member, as it is said, for the western division of the county. But there were rumours affecting the security of his title. Public opinion impaled Mr. Philip Warlow, M.P., on the horns of a legal dilemma. If he had

the power to bequeath the estates to his children, then such power would have belonged equally to the preceding tenant in tail, whom I have called F, and who left two daughters. These were two maiden ladies of an uncertain, or rather too certain, age, from whom could be expected no hope of marriage, or at least none of posterity. They were worthy souls, who dropped quietly out of existence, as, from this moment, they will also drop entirely out of my story. They lived in great comfort; and it was found on their decease that they had left a very considerable legacy to Mr. Philip Warlow. But here another difficulty presented itself. It might have been supposed that by this time the vengeance of old Sir Anthony might have satiated itself. All the interests for which he had provided had failed. The entire series of those named in the will had been exhausted. Under such circumstances would not the property revert to the direct heir, Sir Anthony Warlow and his descendants? There were rumours also that the irate Sir Anthony had wrongfully diverted the succession from his peccant son, and that he had no power to create such a diversion under the settlement by which he himself held the estates from a source still further off and higher up. The rumour was that the castle and estates were to be held together in perpetuity by an indissoluble tenure. Since the conspicuous failure, however, in the case of the Berkeley peerage of making the title go with the lands, the notion was that there was not much use in trying to make lands go with a title. Anyhow the air was full of rumours. It was said that whenever Philip Warlow, M.P., should go—and being a hearty, florid, middle-

aged man, it did not appear likely that he would go soon—there would be a great fight. It was not so very sure who would show fight. The last Sir Anthony was dead, leaving a widow and an only daughter. He had been a poor man; and it was believed that a good-natured Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had given him a very moderate diplomatic appointment, in order to make provision for a baronet of old lineage but decayed fortunes. At least that was the view taken by a Radical member of the House, who, on one occasion, had proposed to omit from the Estimates the very moderate sum which represented Sir Anthony's official income. He had been very much vexed by the circumstance, and made a threat that he would resign. No one took the threat as seriously meant, or cared in the least whether it was so meant or not. It was, however, stringently carried out by the personal intervention of Death; for the baronet died not very long after. He left this only child, and, to the great luck of the Philip Warlows, it was said that she was consumptive. It had oozed out at last—no one exactly knows how such private matters become public property—that she was ordered to spend every winter of her life in the south of France. If only this conflicting interest were removed, then Philip Warlow, M.P., who was popularly accredited with the 'Old One's luck,' would have nothing to fear. Nevertheless there were some old-fashioned people—the same who had shaken their heads and said that no blessing belonged to an unjust inheritance—who were found to back, in their visions of the future, the cause of the widow and the orphan.

CHAPTER II.

THEN were there three Philip Warlows in succession. There was the old man, who came into the estates late, and dying soon after, his son, Philip Warlow, the present possessor, took them; whether rightly or wrongly, nevertheless he took them, and had held possession for more than nineteen years. His eldest son was yet another Philip, with whom I myself had been personally acquainted, which led to my coming down, as the reader will hear presently, into the Warlow country. The same reader may call them, if he likes, according to public-school fashion, Philip *primus*, Philip *secundus*, and Philip *tertius*. This cadet branch of the family had always affected the name Philip as the elder line had adopted the name Anthony. As my narrative is mainly concerned with the gentleman who represents the middle term—the member of Parliament and the holder of estates—it will be found that we need not preserve these distinctions very closely. It would be hard to say how I became somewhat closely acquainted with his son, Philip *tertius*, an acquaintance in which there was more of intimacy than of affection, or even of friendship. I was the elder and more experienced of the two. It so happened that we both had rooms in King's Bench-walk. He had better rooms, and better furnished, than mine by a great deal, and I was able to do him some neighbourly acts of kindness. We had messed together at the same table in hall. We were members of the same club. I became acquainted with him through a casual introduction at the club. Also, there was a certain small debating-club, got up among the men of our inn, which

was held once a month, and was popularly known as *The Lunatics*, to which we both belonged; and in their lucid intervals the members of this debating-club had considerable social intercourse among themselves. In this way hardly a day passed, especially in term time, without our meeting at least once, if not oftener. When the family came up to town in the winter, I got into the way of occasionally dining with them. With the younger members of the family I got on very fairly well. The girls were jolly bouncing young women, with a great deal of practical sagacity about them. They perfectly knew the difference between post-nuptial and ante-nuptial settlement. They regarded me in the proper light of a *Detrimental*; and, indeed, this is precisely what I was. I was connected a good deal with one of the London dailies at that time, and was able to throw an occasional box in the way of the young people, which gave me a certain amount of popularity with them. My experience is that it is especially rich people who like to have this kind of attention shown them. In this way I became a recognised visitor at their town house, and this summer I received a long-deferred invitation to visit them at Warlow Park. But while I got on very well with the juniors, I do not think that I was much of a favourite with Mr. and Mrs. Philip Warlow. I presume that the lady had her maternal cares for her young brood of girls, and did not care to encourage the calls of a briefless barrister. For my own part, I think that she might have safely spared herself any solicitude. But between Philip Warlow, the member, and myself I saw from the first that there was no love lost. We each had a kind of attraction

of repulsion for the other. As a rule, his eye never met your own. Now, without wishing to generalise harshly, my impression is that if a man's eye sedulously avoids your own, that man is either of deficient intellect or a rogue, or a not uncommon combination of the two. When my eye encountered his unawares, I found that it was an eye which I disliked intensely. It was a restless eye, a mean eye, a furtive eye, an uneasy eye, a malevolent eye. I should hardly have imagined that so many bad things could have been said of the human eye. But of course I did not allow my unfavourable opinion of the gentleman's eyes to affect the amenities of our social intercourse.

There was one little matter in reference to my visit to Warlow Park with which I was not at all pleased. The arrangement was that I should go towards the end of July, when the prorogation of Parliament was drawing near, and town was fast emptying. Mrs. Warlow said that the park would be so full of guests coming down for grouse-shooting on the famous Warlow moors that she would have to give me and two or three other young men quarters for the night at the Warlow Arms. I supposed that it was really necessary; but, all the same, I felt that I was rather being left out in the cold. As a matter of fact, there was only one other young man expatriated with myself to the hotel, a young fellow with whom I had not much sympathy, and who had just passed from a local militia regiment into the line. Before long he was taken into the house, and I was left the solitary outsider. I may here mention that old Warlow M.P.—it was only a man with his peculiar optics that could have done so—allowed me the gratification

of paying my own bill at the inn, which certainly much detracted from the sense of being his guest, more especially as my landlord, having to make his profits in the season, charged as much as he thought that there would be any chance of his obtaining.

Certainly that country inn was a delicious place. The landlord, to give him his due, had made it the most comfortable of hotels. Its scenic position was uniquely beautiful. Roses and honeysuckles clambered around the mulioned windows, in the rear lay a garden and croquet-lawn, and beyond that an amphitheatre of wooded hills. The private rooms, so far as possible, were carefully secluded from the business premises. In front was the road from the park to the castle, and a fine trout-river ran nearly parallel. The park was a very grand place—shooting, riding, driving, crowded rooms, and splendid feeds. But I came very much to fancy, and even to prefer, the inn, especially after Lieutenant Stubbs, a fellow of no merit, had left me alone in my ingloriousness. I had quiet tastes, and something on hand in the way of reading and writing. By and by also a special attraction arose. Sitting at the coffee-room window, and smoking the meditative cigar as I looked at papers and books, I became conscious of the presence of two ladies, who used slowly to promenade in the walks, or sit reading or sewing for hours beneath the shadow of the trees. In truth, they formed pleasant figures to contemplate with that background of extraordinary beauty. The two ladies might well be taken for two sisters; but after a time, by many tokens not easily definable, it was easy to see that they were mother and daughter. The elder had the remains of great personal beauty;

and the younger one, without direct claims to 'professional beauty,' in the clear candour of countenance and the melting eyes, had that beautiful expression which is the best part of beauty. I got into the habit of watching these ladies with considerable interest. It was pleasant to see such forms and faces; pleasant to hear the vibrating tones of their exquisite voices.

I casually inquired at the bar of the inn one day what their names might be, but I got no information. They were simply known as the lady and the young lady. They received no letters and expected no callers. There were no other ladies staying in the house. The only other guests were one or two artists or fishermen. Very pleasant fellows too they seemed, and quite as happy in the hotel-bar in the evening as they could be amid the splendid hospitalities of Warlow Park.

One day I had an opportunity of doing these two ladies a slight service.

There was a little side-gate near the hotel which led by a narrow sylvan path amid the more secluded lawns and woodlands of the park. This was the way by which I more commonly strolled up to the house after breakfast, and I possessed a private key to it.

As I strolled up one particular morning, I found the two ladies looking, with admiring, wistful, longing eyes, beyond the little gate towards the path and the lovely vista beyond.

When I was about to use the latchkey, I was struck by this evident expression, and said, raising my hat,

'Perhaps you ladies would like to take a look at the grounds?'

'O, I should like to do so above all things,' said the young lady, with alacrity.

'My love, we must be very careful not to intrude,' said the mother; 'but, at the same time, the place has a very special interest for us, and if you are sure that we are not intruding—'

'You see I have the key,' I said; 'and I feel quite certain that I might take you in.'

I was not altogether so certain as I professed to be; but I was resolved to oblige the ladies, though I might run the risk of meeting the entire company assembled at the house.

The glades and gardens were pretty enough, though the scenery was far from having the magnificence of the castle by the sea. We walked on tranquilly enough in the different avenues. The ladies had evidently much botanical knowledge, and noticed the rich variety of trees and plants; but their minds were apparently busied with something beyond the immediate scene. They asked a few questions about the family at the house, and also about one or two celebrated people who were staying there at the time. Evidently they did not take me for a celebrated person, or suppose that I was staying there; or it might have been simply tact and good manners that prevented any inquiry of the kind. I was a little annoyed when, at a certain turning in the path, I met the master of the house coming along an avenue with some letters in his hand and a dog at his heels.

'That is Mr. Warlow himself,' I said to the ladies.

'O dear, let us turn back!' said the lady. 'I should not like to meet that man on any account;' and for the moment she was positively anxious.

'That man' saved us the trouble; and giving a scowl of recognition, in acknowledgment of my

salute, he turned away abruptly himself.

The ladies did not feel inclined to pursue their walk after this *rencontre*. I did not say a word about being myself bound for the house. I accompanied them back through the grounds to the front door of the hotel, where they took their leave with a courteous expression of thanks.

Warlow Castle presented a grand gala appearance one night during my stay. It was a Foresters' *fête*, or the meeting of a mechanics' institution, or something to do with an archæological society. Anyhow, there was an immense gathering. The people at the park had an electioneering interest to serve, and to give up the castle for a *fête* was one way of serving it. The old dilapidated hall, which had been most carefully refitted, served as a ballroom. It was adorned with shields and banners, and festooned with flowers. 'At an early period of the evening,' as the phrase goes, John Warlow, M.P., had exhibited his honourable person, and ventilated his politics, and explained his conduct, compared with which driven snow was nothing in point of whiteness. One or two other speeches were made, and, in fact, it had been arranged that I should speak myself; and as a young barrister on my promotion, I was not at all unwilling to air my oratory. But it was quite evident that the sense of the meeting, whether rightly or wrongly, was decidedly in favour of dancing as compared to listening. When the head and the heels come into competition, the suffrages of the young people are generally given to the heels. I had reason to be glad afterwards that I had not committed myself to the cause of the *de facto* War-

lows instead of the *de jure* Warlows.

Certainly there is a glamour in moonlight, something that wonderfully sets off the buttresses and battlements of an ancient castle. The committee that managed the festive proceedings had judiciously selected a night when the moon was at the full. The high tide murmured against the battlemented walls. The rooms of the mansion were thrown open for refreshment and conversation; but such was the whirl of the dancers, so incessant the buzz of the talk, that many persons with linked arms promenaded the great central space, the *place d'armes*, as it might be called. Others went down to the shore, and a few even went for a midnight row on the placid sea, that was as a mill-pond. Going down myself to the little pier, and watching the moonlit waves, I found the two ladies of the hotel apparently engaged in the same way.

I ventured to raise my hat and to salute them.

'And so you are not dancing, ladies.'

'No,' said the elder lady; 'we did not come to dance. We only came to see the place. I believe it is only thrown open altogether on such an occasion as this.'

'It is a very striking and beautiful place.'

'It is, indeed. It is one of the loveliest places all along the western coast.'

'But the people came to dance, that is quite clear, and do not care much about the antiquities or the architectural beauties.'

'It was impossible to dance. The company was so very mixed,' murmured the younger.

'In a large country gathering like this,' said the elderly lady, 'it is generally supposed that you cannot have very much comfort and

enjoyment unless you know at least fifty persons.'

'And I don't suppose we know five,' said the younger lady.

'And so this wilful girl chose to come down to the waterside, where you certainly get the best view of the castle. I only hope she will not catch cold in the night air.'

'Nonsense, mother! Who ever heard of catching cold on a warm night of July?'

'She is a delicate plant, Mr. Evelyn.' (The ladies knew my name, though I did not know theirs.) 'She cannot stand an English winter. It is only in the summer that I can let her take these liberties with herself.'

'I am getting quite strong, and shall soon be able to do whatever I like, and I confess that I should like to have a dance.'

I hastened to propose myself as a partner for the next dance. The young lady seemed pleased, but she looked at her mother hesitatingly.

'To say the truth, sir, we have hardly the heart to dance here; and there are reasons why we should not. We are here in a wrong position. We ought to be hosts, not guests.'

I felt puzzled, and no doubt I looked puzzled as well.

'Why not tell him, mother?' said the girl. 'He will not mention to any one who we are.'

'You will be surprised to hear, Mr. Evelyn, that that castle and the woods around it, and all the lands and villages away from here to the park, by right belong to me.'

'Belong to you!' I exclaimed, in amaze.

'Yes, by right they belong to me, or rather, to my daughter.'

I knew the family history of the Warlows, and that skeleton in the cupboard, the fear of a disputed inheritance.

'There is only one person in the world,' I said, 'besides the present possessor, who could ever entertain such an idea.'

'And who is that, pray?'

'Lady Warlow is the person whom I mean.'

'I am Lady Warlow.'

'I understood that Lady Warlow had left this country for good, and found a home in Italy.'

'That is only partly right. In the winter, chiefly for the sake of my daughter, I live on the Italian seaboard, and generally go into Switzerland for the summer. But every second or third summer I come to England, and I do not lose sight of my claims and my right. For myself I do not care for riches. They have very little attraction for me. But it would be wrong for me to lose sight of my daughter's interests. She is the rightful heiress of Warlow Castle.'

It was in this way that I became acquainted with Laura Warlow. I met my fate that memorable night, by that moonlit sea beneath the castle-walls. They only remained for a few days longer at the hotel. But before they went away they gave me a kind invitation to come and see them if I should ever be visiting the Riviera. I immediately invented a long-cherished design of going to the south of France towards the close of that very year. They laughed a little incredulously when I announced my determination, but said that if I really took the journey I must not forget them.

During the next few days I did not go to the park, sending my apologies, and consequently I was able to have various talks with Lady Warlow on the legal aspects of their case. She seemed to have some kind of presumptive legal right, but, as I considered, of very dubious value. I do not

know whether my absence from the park was the moving cause; but at any rate, just about the time that the ladies went away, I was pressed to take up my abode at the park, the young militiaman having taken his departure, and thought it as well to do so.

I did not get on very well with the elderly people, least of all with Philip Warlow. In spite of all his splendid surroundings he was neither healthy nor happy. There was something feline in his tread, something sinister in his look. Now and then we discussed him in the smoking-room, after he had gone to bed. We spoke freely, in the absence of his own people, of that skeleton which all the countryside knew to be stalking through the Warlow cupboards; and it was said also that he had made large accumulations to fight, if necessary, a legal battle, or to insure a competence if the battle were lost. I came, however, to the conclusion that there was something that pressed heavily on Mr. Warlow's mind, beyond anything that could be explained on the hypothesis of the skeleton. That was an open trouble with which all the world was more or less acquainted, a trouble which would in all likelihood come to nothing; but my analysis of his appearance and his ways seemed to point to some secret grief, some corroding care. I am not a man devoid of sympathy, and in an ordinary way hidden care ought to elicit it; but it so happened that Mr. Philip Warlow realised for me the nursery legend of Dr. Fell.

CHAPTER III.

THERE is one time which I shall never forget, which no traveller

ever forgets, 'while memory holds her seat in this distracted globe;' and that is the first visit to the Western Riviera. Even now, as I close my eyes and muse, the vision of that marvellous coast comes back to me—that sea with the deepest of deep blue; the lateen sails lustrous in the sun; the little towns, with their mimic ports, arcaded streets, battle-mented fortresses; the wealth of flowers and fruitage, where the treasures of the conservatory seemed lavishly to line the bays and climb the slopes; the tropic wildness of palms, the groves of lemons, the forests of olives. All the lovely views were for me irradiated by the mystic gleams of love. I had come down the Rhone to Avignon, and thence to Marseilles, and so on, walking or boating, league by league, to Ventimiglia. When I came to the village indicated by Lady Warlow, I took up my abode at the pretty *osteria* which, though out of the way of the ordinary tourist or invalid, had felt their influence to the extent of having grown quite clean and civilised. I found that she possessed a small estate, which she let off to a few tenants, who did her work, and paid her in the produce of their fields and gardens.

She received me most graciously. Her villa was on the side of a lovely bay, at some little distance from the railway and the Corniche Road. Originally it had been a poor kind of place; but she had improved it greatly, adding English comfort to the Italian simplicity and loveliness. There were the English lawn and flower-beds to be found, but behind and all around were the paths cut in a perfect wilderness of orange- and fig-trees, and long arcades of the festooning vines, which were covered with luscious fruit. Lady Warlow said her estate supplied

all her modest wants, so that she was not obliged to get much from Nice or Genoa. I remember that her own grapes supplied her with a very pleasant wine, between champagne and perry, much superior to the ordinary Italian wines. Here I certainly had what they call 'a good time of it.' It just suited me to eat illimitable figs, or to read Italian poetry in the boat or in the summer-house.

There was always the question of the great Warlow succession cropping up. I found that my Lady Warlow, the sweetest of good women, was troubled with an *idée fixe*. She had a notion that favourable terms of compromise could be effected on her claim, and, as I happened singularly enough to know both plaintiff and defendant—to push matters on to a subsequent stage in terminology—that I was just the person to arrange such a compromise.

'But could we not compromise the matter?' she would say, and ever keep on saying. 'It seems to me to be the very case for a compromise. I should be so sorry to turn all that large family of sons out of doors, and to spoil their careers. An immense property like that would be of very little use to a young girl. As far as my experience of the world goes, young ladies who are heiresses are not much the happier for the circumstance. If I stood alone in the world, I should not trouble at all about the matter.'

'I am sure, dearest mother,' here Laura gently broke in, 'you must not trouble for me, although I confess that it would be a grand thing to be mistress of this famous old castle.'

'My darling, you are your father's daughter, and I must do all I can for you. I daresay it will not come to much, but I must do everything in my power. I

should not hope to meet your father in peace if I did not look after the rights of his only child.'

Here there was an embrace, and a gush of silent tears.

'I would be quite satisfied with a compromise. I would make a compromise, even if I felt certain of the success of my claim. They are quite welcome to the park, if they would only let me have the castle, with just enough to keep it up properly.'

But here I felt that I must speak professionally, as became my barristerial dignity.

'In this case, my dear madam, the interests are so vast and unwieldy that a compromise, to use Mr. Gladstone's expression, is quite out of the region of practical politics. You claim an ancient castle and a modern palace, and a rent-roll of twenty thousand a year. If your claim is well founded, none of your friends could advise you to take less than either the castle or the park, with at least a hundred thousand pounds to carry out the idea. And do you suppose that any one would yield you so much, unless you had the strongest possible case? And if you had this strongest possible case, why should you be content with the value of half a dozen years' purchase, instead of your full rights? In some cases a compromise is all very well; it is a fair and natural and Christian thing to do. The very best lawyers pride themselves on preventing litigation and effecting compromises. But I am afraid that this is hardly a case of the sort, and that no lawyer would see his way to it.'

'And I suppose if we went to law it would cost an immense amount of money?'

'An immense amount.'

'Would it cost five thousand pounds?'

'In all probability it would. And if you lost, it would cost as much more.'

'What would be the first steps to take?'

'Well, you must have counsel's opinion, and marshal all your facts and proofs. The first practical step you will have to take in asserting your rights will be to serve writs of ejectment on all the tenants. There are some hundreds of them, are there not?'

'At least two hundred.'

'You will have to serve your writs on all of them. Then these cases will be "consolidated," as they are called, and the case will come on to be tried at Westminster, or at the county assizes.'

'And if it goes against me, I suppose I shall be ruined?'

'I hope not, Lady Warlow.'

'Nearly all my income dies with me. Laura would only have the small income of my settlement, and a sum which her father and I saved up for her, and which we have invested, as well as we could, in shares and houses. And the dear girl would have nothing, absolutely nothing, if the case went against us. It would be a gambler's stake. Just the sort of thing, in fact, that goes on at Monaco, at Monte Carlo, so close to us. It is only a dream. My child will never have her rights. No one but her mother will know that she is the rightful heiress of Warlow.'

This was not the only conversation which we had on this subject. I give it rather as the sum and substance of many similar conversations. For myself, I was beginning to find an interest and delight at St. Donato, which quite threw into the shade all possible and prospective forensic triumph. In my own mind I constructed what would be a most triumphant case for the plaintiff, for what was

to be emphatically the *cause célèbre* of the time. As I used to dress myself in the morning, I found myself thundering against the oppression of the beautiful young heiress, and moving judge and jury to tears by the recital of her wrongs. As I concluded my enraptured oration, rival solicitors pressed around me to force their briefs on my acceptance. I saw myself on the high-road to the Woolsack. Then another sweeter vision still came upon me. As I had reinstated these ladies in their possessions, so I was myself to be rewarded by the hand of the heiress. In my sober, legal, professional mind, I really considered that she had no chance. But such lovely imaginations may at times visit even the arid minds of mercenary lawyers. But I entirely acquit myself of a mercenary motive. I absolutely condemned this vast claim on the Warlow estates. I did not see that it had a legal leg on which to rest. I was not sure that the law lay on the side of Lady Warlow, that there was even any justice in her claim. The other side had possession, which is nine-tenths of the law; and how hopeless and how cruel it is in nearly every instance to eject a possessor who is in the calm enjoyment of inherited estates! I became as adverse to Lady Warlow's claim as if I had been a lawyer employed in the interests of the opposite party.

But if the legal part of the business withdrew into intangible shadows, the other part emerged into greater interest and reality. I kept lingering on that enchanted coast of the Riviera. I had formed a very long programme for my holiday: I was to have seen Turin, Milan, the Italian lakes; I was to have gone on to Florence, to Rome, to Naples. I sketched

even a bolder programme, and was to go on to Sicily or to Constantinople. But now I was well content to dream away existence on this lovely shore. My longest journeys were to Nice on the west and to Genoa on the east. They were noble cities, both of them. Nice had the comforts and luxuries and dissipations of London; and Genoa, more intensely Italian, had perhaps the strongest attractiveness. But I always came back well pleased to St. Donato. How often I traced that Corniche Road, now while it skirted the deep, deep blue of the Mediterranean, now while it wandered through the vast pale olive-groves, now while it mounted to the crest of lofty hills and commanded a magnificent panorama! I even blessed the railway, which so constantly intervenes between the famous road and the sea. It made it so easy for us to take delightful expeditions beyond the reach of the mule-carriage. Lady Warlow was not very strong, and could not walk very far, and, being nervous about her daughter, was not willing that she should go far beyond the limits which she imposed on herself. Although I stayed at the little inn, in a sort of way she was my hostess, and Laura, who knew a surprising amount of the ground, acted as my *cicerone*. What a glorious time it was! Sometimes we took a boat, which saved the road, and took us from point to point of the bay. The fishermen looked on my friends as naturalised Italians, and not to be preyed upon according to the common destiny of tourists. They gave us the best fish that could be obtained in the Mediterranean waters, before they carried them to Monaco or the big towns. Along the beaten roads there were jealous walls which excluded the wayfarers from the grounds, except

where glimpses were given of gardens fair as Armida's. But there were secluded paths, where the fig-trees and the lemon-trees bore their clusters almost to the ground, and where plants and flowers, which in England are only seen in conservatories, flourished luxuriantly in this almost tropical region.

To all this charming scenery, Laura herself, the embodied spirit of the scene, added a deeper and a spiritual charm. To me, poor London worldling as I was, brought up in studies which, as Lord Chief-Justice Coleridge uncomplimentarily remarks, 'contract the intellect and harden the heart,' such a character gave a new insight into the glorious possibilities of womanhood and of human nature itself. She was to me the most striking instance which I had ever met of the way intellectual and moral qualities illustrate and supplement each other. It may be put down as an aphorism, that truth and goodness always go together. Laura had one of the most lucid minds that I had ever encountered. She might have been one of the best mathematicians of Girton College. She might have been a judge like Portia or Miss Terry. She had all a woman's instinct for arriving at the truth; but, unlike most women, she could clearly trace the swift silent processes by which she arrived at the truth. There was a simplicity and directness about her speech and all her ways which really gave great piquancy to her conversation. The soft shy eyes would brighten up and be as bold as a gazelle's, and the calm broad forehead beneath the abundant brown hair seemed always so candid and noble. It was not so much the evident intelligence that shone through her aspect and her words,

but the goodness that pervaded the intelligence, and was indestructibly wrought up with it. It was a great deal to be admitted to see something of the treasures of that heart and mind. She had been very carefully educated by her mother; but it was an education that was rather deficient on the side of modern accomplishments, but gave ample amends on the side of solid acquirements. She had a wonderful taste for natural science—Darwin and Tyndall would have been delighted with their pupil—and one accomplishment at least she possessed to a very high degree, that of drawing, which helped and intensified her love and knowledge of Nature. She was not, like many young ladies, superficially acquainted with the philosophy of these distinguished gentlemen, and able to use it for the purposes of smart talk. She loved them for their facts, into which she wove her own modest experiences and frank ingenuous fancies. For a girl who really revelled in the domain of material things, and who was full of natural *espièglerie*, I had never met one whose whole view of life was so tender and consecrated. It was not the intellect, it was the soul, that illumined her whole nature. As she stopped at a point to seize the effect of landscape and seascape, or gathered plants, or compared the varied foliage of the forest tracts, or brought in some happy citation or allusion to the books she was reading, I thought that there was a clever girl who, one of these days, would be writing in the magazines and reviews. She was not a professed musician, which was rather singular, as she was one of the clearest and most musical readers whom I had ever heard. French and Italian she spoke as a native, as was natural, having lived so

long on a frontier-land, when, in course of an hour or two, one might pass from Italy to France or from France to Italy.

One little advantage I had, from the fact that I had come down the Rhone on my journey out, and, when staying at Avignon, had gone over to Vaucluse to see Petrarch's fountain and valley. So I was able to talk to Laura of that other Laura of poetry and literature, whom, good as she was, I did not consider at all equal to my own particular Laura. I was sorry that I was not a Petrarch to celebrate her praises. While I stayed at Hôtel la Forêt, I am afraid that I was one of those of whom Mr. Murray reproachfully says that the fried trout and eels, *soupe à la baigne* and *coquilles d'écrivisse*, made a deeper impression than any *souvenirs* of Laura. But then I had this present Laura to revive and settle the impression. She was glad to talk about Avignon, not only on account of the wonderful old Pope's castle, which now serves as a barrack for two thousand men; but because the little cemetery beyond the walls contained the marble tomb of the two Mills. The young lady had actually read part of the *Logic*, and remembered the affecting dedication to the essay on Liberty. I repeated by heart the wonderful epitaph—although I confess I thought it a little exaggerated—which recounted that if the world possessed only a few such women as the wife of John Stuart Mill, the earth would soon become like the longed-for heaven. The Laura I had found might worthily take her place either by Petrarch's Laura or by Mrs. Mill.

I think I might have met her, and possibly have held my own, on the literary platform; but it was the goodness and the spiritual instincts of the girl that thoroughly

abashed me, and made me aware of a more enlightened and profounder nature than my own.

'I do so wish that I could be of some little use in the world,' she said. 'This is a lovely place. I suppose that, quite seriously, the people that know all about such things would say that it is really one of the loveliest places in the whole world.'

'It is not so much the locality,' I answered meditatively, 'as the laziness, which suits me so much. I particularly agree with Petrarch in what he said about his little crib at Vaucluse. He said that he would lie on the meadow-grass or by the river-bank, tasting the sweets of leisure, and having all his time at his own disposal.'

'That is all very well,' answered Laura; 'but excuse me, Mr. Evelyn, I don't think that you are really so lazy as you pretend to be. For my own part I long to be of some use in the world. What business have I got to be spending my best years among myrtles and orange groves, while other people are walking on the hard London pavements and amid courts and alleys?'

'I think, Miss Warlow, that there are two very obvious duties which you have to discharge, and which might make you quite content.'

'And what is your notion of my obvious duties, Mr. Evelyn?'

'Your first duty, as I take it, Miss Warlow, is to get as strong and as well as you possibly can. This is what the delicious climate is intended for. You happy dwellers on the Riviera ought to remember that this famous climate brings peace and life to you. There are thousands who are dying even for the want of such a climate.'

'I wonder if life is really worth making such a fuss about. Why do people cling to it so closely?

I daresay it is keeping us out of something much better.'

'For the second reason which I am going to give you, Miss Warlow—for your mother's sake. She lives in your love. She is well only when you are well. She dedicates her life to you, and you, in return, are dedicating your life to her.'

'O, that dearest of mothers! She is worth it all. She is worth a hundred poor lives like mine. But you must know that we women have got our ambitions, which may be reconciled with our duties. When I was in Rome last spring, nothing struck me so much in the convents and churches as the records of good women. If one could only live the life of a St. Cecilia!'

'Perhaps you would like to stop in Rome altogether: do in Rome as the Romans—be a Romanist yourself?'

'Not in the least, sir. But perhaps there are some things, even in Rome, which might bear transplanting to London. We women want a career, and there is no career like that of practical goodness.'

'Perhaps it may come some day?'

She paused and said, 'You remember Milton's sonnet on his blindness.'

I gave her the words which were in her thoughts:

'His state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding
speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without
rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.'

'There is another point which I would suggest to you, Miss Laura,' I went on. 'Don't you think that there are often many years of unconscious education going on to brace and fit a person for future destinies?'

'Very likely. And what do you

suppose that my future destiny is likely to be?'

'I should say that of a great lady.'

'What an extraordinary idea! What can make you imagine that I should ever be a great lady?'

'It seems to me that you have had a very remarkable and special kind of education. How thoroughly cosmopolitan you are! While you are so fond of Nature and solitude, you know great cities and have met with famous people, you belong to the few people who can really appreciate and gain by foreign society. I think, too, that you have the power of touching and influencing those with whom you come in contact. All these things have assisted you in acquiring a remarkable and peculiar education. You ought to be a great lady. I think I shall call you the Countess Warlow.'

I know I spoke with some freedom, but no young lady is ever really angry for being saluted as a future countess.

'Ah, you are thinking of the Warlow estate? We shall never get it. You do not really think that we have any chance of getting it, do you now?'

'You do not mind my giving you my plain, practical, legal opinion?'

'Indeed, that is just what we want.'

'Then I do not think that there is any chance worth speaking of in your favour.'

'You must know that I am quite glad to hear you say so. I do not think that I could be happier than I am. There are many drawbacks to the possession of money. For instance, I should be sorry to drive up in a carriage to visit a cottage. I should think that there was a kind of irony in such a contrast that would pre-

vent any real sympathy. I cannot tell you how entirely a matter of indifference this inheritance is to me. If I have any feeling in the matter it really lies the other way.'

'If such an inheritance comes to you, Miss Warlow, you may depend upon it that it comes for a good purpose, and a purpose that you would fulfil admirably. How few of those who have the influence of wealth and station act, I will not say religiously or generously, but even with wisdom and liberality. I am only sorry you are not secure of what may be your rightful position. I am sure that you would make yourself the centre of a radiating influence for good.'

The candid reader, who is learned in the workings of the human heart, may suppose from the foregoing remarks and statements that my feelings were becoming decidedly compromised in the direction of Laura Warlow. But I held a decidedly glacial theory on the subject. I endeavoured to keep my affections well iced. I prided myself on possessing a judicial mind. All my friends concurred in complimenting me on my judicial mind, and I really began to think that there was a great deal in it. If I could only be advanced to the Bench *per saltum*, instead of wading through a sea of business, it might be better in the long-run for the destinies of the British people. Unfortunately there was not even a sea of business through which I might wade. I was really very fond of Laura. I felt that her heavenly mind was even something in advance of my judicial mind. If she were really the heiress of the Warlow estates, I felt that I should have no chance. Her mother and her friends would look for something more

than a briefless barrister. At the present moment Laura was not worth a farthing. She would, one of these days, have an excellent little property; but might that day be as remote as possible in the years to come! An exceptionally bright and pleasant existence was assured to her, and should I bring shadow and difficulty into it by making her a partner in my fortunes when they were at the lowest water-mark, and as yet showed no sign of a rising tide? It is true that I felt the impulse of energy and work flowing to the very finger-tips. But a man can hardly afford to marry on the strength of his aspirations.

It was just possible that there might be a forlorn hope of my proving of some service to these ladies. Though their claim was shadowy and uncertain, there was a mere chance that there was something in it. It was quite probable also that the Warlows in possession might know the strength of the adverse claim better than the ladies did themselves, and might think it worth their while to make a compromise that might liberate them from a Damocles' sword impending over their heads. I felt extremely reluctant to break the ice, and to open up such a claim. There were various prudential reasons that were fairly against it. Warlow, M.P., as member for that division of the county, was a man of great influence, and might throw some good things in my way. He was a social card that might be played effectively again and again. In fact, except one other individual, I had no friend of an equally assured a position. The step which I proposed to take would infallibly break off any friendly relationship with him. No sensible friend

would advise me to take such a step. It was one which would do the ladies no good, and which might do me much harm. That, however, I felt was only a small point. If there was any of that gentlemanhood left, which Hal-lam says is a relique of the days of chivalry, it must be exerted on behalf of these ladies. If their claim was valueless, neither they nor I would desire to take any unfair advantage. But it was possible that their claim had a value, and that no one knew the value better than Philip Warlow himself. I was quite prepared to take their side, and to breakutterly with him if necessary.

Before I left the Riviera, Lady Warlow told me that she had made up her mind to adventure a thousand pounds in some experimental litigation with the present holder of the estates. I told her that this money would be either a great deal too little or a great deal too much. Philip Warlow would either submit to a friendly compromise, or fight out matters to the bitter end. She offered me her cheque, but I refused to take it, saying that I would draw upon her if necessary. I asked for, however, and obtained, the fullest powers to act on her behalf.

CHAPTER IV.

It so happened, when I first came up to London as a very young man, fresh from Cambridge to London, that my father had given me an introduction to an old friend of his. He and my father had been at the same school and afterwards at the same college. After that time their course had bifurcated. Up to that point my father had been thought the cleverer, as he was certainly the more industrious and

the more successful. He had taken more prizes at school and a better degree at the University. It was said that he and Sir Charles Staniforth had been suitors for the same young lady, who had been a great country belle, and possessed a desirable private property. She had married my father, and perhaps this marriage had contributed to loosen the ties of old friendship. Anyhow, my father took a college-living, married his wife, begat sons and daughters, protested against all new-fangled heresies, and rather allowed his mind to run into turnips. Staniforth, on the other hand, had eagerly devoted himself to law and politics. His rejection—if there had been a rejection, for I never understood the matter clearly—had been the making of him. It had saved him from the effect of an imprudent alliance, and had enabled him to concentrate his powers. He became famous as an advocate and cross-examiner. He was not a man of first-rate eloquence, but he had a marvellous power of winning the appreciation and good opinion of jurymen. For a time he had had very hard lines. He had stood one or two very troublesome and costly elections in the interests of his party. He was an enthusiastic Liberal, and had all the courage of his convictions, whether they might be right or wrong. The Reform Club had helped him greatly from their political funds, and so had some friends, but still these contests were very exhausting to his own purse. I imagine that practically the rejection was no real misfortune to him, for his party was at this date in a hopeless minority, and he was able to devote all his time to the legal profession, in which he advanced by rapid strides to the very front. Then

a halcyon time came to him which is sometimes the case with lucky lawyers. The party thought that he had done quite enough for their interest, and found him one of those very few snug pocket-boroughs which are still in existence, and which by being given to men of genius rescue the House of Commons from being the Chamber of Mediocrity. By one of those sudden revulsions of popular opinion which in this country reduces political power to the vibrations of a pendulum, his party had come into office. He became, first, Solicitor, and then Attorney-General. He had seven good years, as if he had been one of the Egyptian fat kine. He made some nine thousand a year from Government, through contentious and non-contentious business, and the same amount, at least, in an immense private practice. Then the pendulum vibrated to the other side; he went out of office with the solid satisfaction that he had made a hundred thousand pounds while he was in it. He bought an estate, and built a beautiful house in the neighbourhood of the snug little borough which he represented or misrepresented.

Sir Charles Staniforth was somewhat different from the idea which the public generally entertain respecting great lawyers. Perhaps he was not a very great lawyer. There were people who said that he owed all his law to a gentleman who had the honorary title of the Attorney-General's devil. But without doubt he was a great gentleman, a great advocate, a man of infinite tact and wisdom, a man who could afford to get technical law from the Counsel to the Treasury or any other sources. Sir Charles, who had a great deal more kindness and feeling than people gave

him credit for, had been very kind to me, asking me to dine with him now and then in the season, and giving me a few days' shooting at his country place. I calculated that one of his invitations would be due this winter, and I made sure that in a friendly sort of way I might talk over this great Warlow business with him.

'And how does Sir Charles like being out of office? I ventured to ask Lady Staniforth when I descended from my room to the drawing-room, on the morning of my arrival at Hatherleigh Manor.

'O, I am so delighted that he has gone out at last,' said Lady Staniforth; 'the work was beginning to kill him. His nerves were getting altogether shattered. I should have gone mad myself if we had stayed in another six months.'

Briefless one as I was, I could not appreciate the state of misery that may arise from an excess of business.

'When he came down from London his nerves were quite unstrung, and I am sure that nothing is so catching as nervousness. He had double doors put over all the house, and could not even bear the dear children's voices, of whom he is so fond, you know. But you will see him presently, when he comes in from his ride, and let me know what you think of him.'

One of Lady Staniforth's nicest social arts was the establishing of such confidential terms with her visitors, professing to receive enlightenment when all the light and sweetness worth mentioning were on her own side.

That night there was a dinner-party; but after lunch, next day, Sir Charles, in pursuance of his design of getting up his nervous system, heaped mighty logs on

the fire, and settled back in an easy-chair with his cigar.

I then brought before him the story of the Warlow inheritance, and asked him if he had ever heard anything about the disputed inheritance.

'Heard of it! Of course I have heard of it. I am not sure that I didn't give an opinion about it one of these days; that is to say, I and another fellow gave an opinion together, especially the other fellow. Look here, Evelyn: this England of ours isn't such a big place after all. The number of large disputed inheritances can hardly, at any time, be more than a dozen or a score. Of course we lawyers hear something of them all. We are like the vultures, and scent the carcass afar off.'

'In this case there is some idea of a compromise.' And I went a little into the case.

'Very unprofessional. I couldn't encourage that sort of thing. Bad for business.'

In all fealty to my profession, I hastened to throw scorn on the idea of compromises in general; but said that there were special circumstances in this case which rendered a compromise desirable.

'I suppose it is the only way in which your client is at all likely to get anything.'

'Very likely. But the chief reason is, that she has hardly got the sinews of war, which, in a matter like this, ought to be very stout.'

'If her case is a good one, she can go into the money-market with her bonds, and get any amount of assistance from people whom you and I know of. There is more than one enterprising firm that would take up the case.'

But I did not at all think that Lady Warlow would let her case be made a matter of speculation.

And presently, Sir Charles,

having added a libation to his cigar, fell asleep on the settee.

Before I left he very kindly adverted to the subject, and said,

'I see you are interested in this case, Mr. Evelyn, and I would give you a helping hand if I could. I quite agree with you, that a compromise is impossible. It is a case of all or nothing. But I will give you a line to a man I know in Gray's Inn, who is as good a man for this kind of business as any I know. He has made a common name uncommon, by having it twice over. Lots of people know Jones Jones. He is a curious combination of the solicitor, the antiquarian, and the detective. He will treat you well, particularly if you tell him that you have come from me. We have done a good deal of business in our time together, and may do more.'

As a rule, I don't like solicitors' offices. Anything more incongruous than Gray's Inn-square compared with the bright Riviera cannot be imagined. Jones Jones had the desks, tin-boxes, briefs and parchments, correspondence and red tape, which appear as necessary to a solicitor as a lot of cobwebs is to a bottle of old port. But Jones Jones had also an inner room corresponding with an inner nature, which room had choice prints and water-colours on the walls, and lots of learned and polite literature, and photographs and cards on the mantelpiece; and secret little bins and cupboards stored with good things. He received me more in a personal than a professional way, being greatly gratified with the few lines which Sir Charles Staniforth had sent him, for whom he entertained a great admiration. He was a man much more taken up with the lore, the antiquities, and the research of his profession

than its more practical details. I insisted on giving him a cheque on account, which my knowledge of human nature assured me would have the effect of facilitating business. Then we became great allies, and worked most cordially together.

We went into the history and mystery of the whole business. We made inquiries and researches, and even took the opinion of counsel on several points which emerged, which opinions, I regret to say, were very far from being wholly encouraging. Then we settled that the legal campaign must be conducted in a social rather than a litigant fashion. In other words, it was settled that I had better proceed at once with my scheme for a compromise.

CHAPTER V.

I WATCHED for my opportunity, and it came. I was dining at Philip Warlow's one night, and understood that after dinner the party were going out for the evening. I knew the young ladies would carry off the mother, and that the father on that winterly night would probably prefer to stay at home. The wind and sleet outside would give him a keener relish for the glowing fire and the blushing wines.

I confess I felt a thrill of remorse when the three handsome girls came into the dining-room to wish their father good-bye. I was plotting to deprive them of their grand inheritance. I needed all my recollection of the widow and her daughter. How very much better it would be if matters could only be transacted in an amicable generous spirit! Surely the estates were large enough to satisfy every interest. Why should not the line in whom

the title was hereditary receive some endowment? I should be sorry if the numerous Warlow brood should be deprived of their heritage. I should be equally sorry if Laura should lose her rights. Not with her, however, but with this impenetrable Philip Warlow rested the solution of the problem.

Mrs. Warlow, in all her grandeur, had entered the carriage with her three girls. There was no room amid those outspread billowy dresses for young Philip, who accordingly followed them in a hansom.

I will do Philip Warlow, M.P., the justice of saying that he always gave one a good dinner and an excellent bottle of wine. Nevertheless I do not think that he would have minded giving me a little poison in the one or the other. All the same, it would be worth knowing where he got his wine from.

It required a little courage to commence the conversation which I had planned. I let my man drink a few glasses of that admirable Manzanilla, and then I opened the attack.

'Do you happen to know your own connection, Lady Warlow, who has a pretty place near Mentone?'

He looked surprised. An alert look passed into his face, an evil expression into his eye.

'I can't say I do. I knew her late husband a little. He dined with me once at the Reform. Do you?'

'O yes,' I answered. 'I know her very well. I was staying several weeks in her neighbourhood at the end of the autumn, and saw a great deal of her.'

'They say her daughter is a pretty girl, but excessively delicate.'

'She used to be very delicate,'

I answered; 'but I believe that she is growing quite well. Her mother does not now reside in the Mediterranean on account of her child's health, but because she has a little property there, and finds it cheaper and likes the country better than she likes England.'

'Exactly so. I am afraid that she is not at all well off.'

'Not so badly, Mr. Warlow. I believe that she has accumulated rather a large sum, part of which I am afraid she is prepared to devote to litigation.'

'Poor lady! I am afraid that she will find that an expensive luxury, and one that is not at all an amusing one.'

There was an accent of falsity in these words. I caught a side glance of him. He was bristling up like a fighting-cock. The nose was in the air, the lips compressed, the eyes scowling.

'She seems to have an idea, Mr. Warlow, that her daughter, who represents the elder line of the family, has some claim upon the family estates.'

The adversative ill-tempered expression deepened. He spoke lightly, but I thought that I could distinguish an undertone of anxiety in his next words.

'And is the poor lady really under the idea that she can oust me from these estates?'

'I don't know that she has either the wish or the intention to try and oust you out of the estates. But she certainly has the idea that, at least after your time, the estates ought to revert to her daughter.'

He gave a deep sigh, which unconsciously escaped him, and which, singularly enough, sounded like a sigh of relief.

'I know very well that there has been a little gossip on this subject in the county, and very

annoying has the gossip been. There are always spiteful people whose interest it is to promote and diffuse such gossip. But, like most gossip, it has no substantial basis to go upon.'

'Lady Warlow thinks there is, and I know as a matter of fact that Sir Charles Staniforth, the late Attorney-General, thinks there may be something in it.'

'Then all I can say is that Sir Charles Staniforth tells you one thing and me another. I believe, too, that I may venture to say that I have the opinion of nearly all the judges of England in favour of the security of my title.'

'I was not aware that the claim had ever come before the judges.'

'Of course it has never been tried before a court of law. I know that very well. But both I and my father before me have taken the opinion of nearly every lawyer of eminence who has since risen to the Bench, and there is a unanimity of opinion that my position is impregnable.'

'It is just possible, Mr. Warlow, that their opinions as judges might differ from their opinions as counsel.'

'I really don't see why it should, Mr. Evelyn. But if Lady Warlow has any idea of the sort, by all means let her try it on. I am afraid that it will prove very much a matter of the longest purse. And if she has got her ready-money, I have made my modest accumulations also, and I am fully prepared to fight the matter in any and every court in England.'

'It is just possible, sir, that the matter might be very definitely settled in a single court.'

'It would make no difference. I know exactly what their supposed case is, and it is worthless. There is just a small nicety in the matter, which might give a

colourable pretext to a claim which might give work for hungry lawyers, but really nothing that requires any serious attention.'

'Lady Warlow is no lawyer herself, sir, and does not profess to say whether she has a strong claim or a weak claim. She naturally supposes that she has a strong claim; but she has given me a very remarkable commission, which I must discharge even at the risk of giving you some pain and annoyance. She is very much impressed with the fact that I am very well acquainted both with you and with herself; and she is very anxious that instead of any litigation there should be a friendly compromise, in which she is ready to do everything that is considerate and self-sacrificing short of total surrender of her daughter's rights.'

'Considerate and self-sacrificing!' he repeated, with a bitter sneer. 'Highly so, I imagine. Sir, let me give you a word of caution. You are mixing yourself up in our family affairs in a way which I think is very little to your credit. Have you ever heard of such a thing as barratry, sir? Do you know that your conduct in encouraging and promoting litigation is absolutely illegal, and that you might be disbarred by the Benchers of your Inn for such conduct?'

'I must beg you to observe, Mr. Warlow, that I am doing the very opposite of encouraging litigation. I am offering you the olive-branch of peace. I want to prevent useless expense and ill-feeling. You have been nearly all your life aware that there has been the existence of this claim on the part of Sir Anthony Warlow, and you probably know much better than any of us what amount of justice there may be in

the claim, and whether it is really worth your while finally to extinguish it or not.'

My impression was that he would have risen in passion, and have thoroughly denounced this nefarious attempt to obtain terms. To my surprise, however, he did nothing of the sort.

'And pray what conditions may my Lady Warlow desire to impose?'

'That would be a matter for subsequent discussion,' I said. 'The first matter is whether you are really prepared to admit a compromise.'

'I am really not prepared to do anything of the kind. But I make a point of never deciding things off-hand. I always like, if possible, to sleep upon a business proposition. I will think over all that you have said, Mr. Evelyn, and let you have a line in a few days.'

A few days passed, and then a few weeks, but the promised line never came. It occurred to me that it was just within the bounds of probability—such things have happened—that something had gone wrong with the post. I accordingly sent him a civil line, reminding him that I was to hear from him, and expressing surprise that I had not so heard. To this I got the following reply :

'Lowndes-square,
Saturday morning.

'Dear Sir,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. I am sorry that I have not written before, as you expected that I should. The matter which you mentioned is so extremely slight and ridiculous, that it altogether escaped my recollection. I have simply to state that I will submit to no compromise in any way whatever. And having an acquaintance with you, I would

venture to suggest that you should apply your abilities, such as they are, in some more promising and profitable direction.—Your obedient servant,

‘PHILIP WARLOW.’

‘This will not quite do, my dear friend,’ I said to myself when I had read the letter for the third or fourth time. ‘I understand that you will not compromise, and that possibly our case may not be worth the compromising. But when you say that the case is so slight and ridiculous that it altogether escaped your recollection, I must take the liberty of totally disbelieving you. And when there is a lie there is generally something which the lie is intended to cover.’

CHAPTER VI.

I WENT back to Gray’s Inn and talked the matter over with Jones Jones. I had hoped that I might have elicited something from Mr. Warlow in the course of the interview, some admission that he knew we had some sort of case to go on. This, however, was not the fact. He had certainly not admitted that there was any case at all. All that the most diligent scrutiny of his language and demeanour amounted to was, that he certainly appeared relieved when he understood that there was no attack upon himself, but only against his successors; and next, that his letter seemed to contain a falsehood or equivocation.

‘And it might be only his cheek. He might be putting on side. There is only a very slight symptom,’ said I.

‘A symptom, as the doctors tell us, may mean everything or may mean nothing.’

‘Just so. And at the present

moment we are at a standstill. There is a dead wall.’

‘I may tell you candidly,’ said Jones Jones, ‘that my opinion agrees with the late Attorney-General’s. Warlow naturally thinks that, as no other person is put in the line of successors, the estates will pass to his own family instead of being handed over to anybody else. I really think that it may be only a colourable claim. It is a case of *aut Caesar aut nullus*, and I am afraid it is *nullus*.’

‘That is very much my own idea. But the thought occurs to me that it may be possible to find some flaw in Warlow’s own pedigree.’

Jones Jones was quiet, and took a turn about the dingy room.

‘That’s not at all a bad idea of yours, Mr. Evelyn. It can do no harm to scrutinise it as narrowly as you can. You would be surprised to hear what unpleasant things turn up frequently enough in family history. Some time ago a wealthy man came to me, who had an idea that there was a baronetcy in the family which might be his. I set to work to prove it for him, and worked out his pedigree. When I came to his great-grandfather there was not the least doubt that this venerated ancestor had been hung for sheep-stealing.’

‘And the idea came to nothing?’

‘Just so. And it cost him precisely a hundred pounds to ascertain this interesting fact in the family history.’

‘I am afraid there is no such luck in the case of Philip Warlow.’

‘Very likely; but what do you know about the history of the man?’

‘Not very much,—not more than all the world knows. His father was a manufacturer down

in Lancashire. He quite sprang from the ranks, I believe, but always remembered that he had good Warlow blood in him. He had no more idea of coming into this splendid inheritance than he had of getting hold of one of Jupiter's satellites. I believe he had made a very good business, and saved a lot of money before it fell in. His son was already married, and become a partner in the concern, and had had one or two children at this date. The old man only held the property for a couple of years, when he died, and Philip the second reigned in his stead.'

'And your contention is that he had no right to reign, the limitations under old Sir Anthony's will being all exhausted ?'

'Just so.'

'And the property was left to old Philip *primus*, he being defined to stand in a certain relationship to the Warlow family. Indeed, I fully remember that the language of the will is to such an effect. It would be a very lucky thing for your friends if we could only discover a *bar sinister* among these Philips.'

'I could launch out into a whole lot of philippics against them, in the style of Demosthenes and Cicero.'

'That would be of no use, my young friend. But it will do us no harm if we overhaul their pedigree very thoroughly. It is a forlorn chance. Do you happen to know if he has any poor relations in the place he came from ?'

'In Manchester, I believe he has. I have even heard ill-natured rumours that he has a drunken charwoman of a first cousin, to whom he makes a regular allowance, not to mention one or two other relatives as well.'

'If we can only find out their names and addresses, that will

furnish us with a clue, if there is only anything discovered to which the clue may lead us. It is worth while spending a hundred pounds on the matter.'

I do not know how Jones Jones discovered the names and addresses of the great Mr. Warlow's poor relations; but so he did. Whether he bribed servants or postman, I could not tell, and I asked no questions for conscience' sake. I am afraid that there was a little dirty work for Jones Jones to do; and if so, Jones Jones did it effectively, without soiling anybody's fingers except his own. He certainly discovered a brazen bloated-looking woman, who lived in the back slums of Manchester, who declared that she was a relation of Mr. Warlow's, and who appeared to pass her whole existence in a state of gin-and-water, presumably supplied from the funds of that gentleman. Against Mr. Warlow she had feelings of the deadliest antipathy, as is natural on the part of gin-drinkers against their benefactors, and complained greatly that she was being defrauded out of her rights. What the relationship was, or what the supposed rights were, we could never exactly find out. I believe that Jones Jones had to disguise himself as a mill-hand, and consume a considerable quantity of gin-and-water, before he could get on confidential terms with this old harridan.

In one of her general attacks upon Philip Warlow she used the expression that Warlow was a proud thief, and his mother was no better than she should be. A statement of this kind was not an unpleasing one to hear; but we doubted whether it was anything more than a vulgar expletive. Similarly she asserted that her uncle, old Philip Warlow, was a base-born rascal. I felt that it

was only a question of more or less gin whether she would not use similar scurrilous language against every member of the family. Nevertheless, the statement set us examining parish registers vigorously, beginning with this Philip *primus*, and working each way, both up to his forbears and down to his descendants. The marriage of Mr. Warlow appeared to have been quite a gorgeous affair. It had been solemnised by the bishop of the diocese. The bride wrote a fashionable fluent hand. A whole rivulet of names wandered about the margin of the marriage register. Most of the registers were in the parish-church of Manchester, now the cathedral; but a few were in a neighbouring parish. This branch of the Warlows appeared to be constant to a particular neighbourhood in Manchester. The marriage of Philip Warlow *primus*, in 1826, was not hallowed by a bishop; but then it took place in days when Manchester did not possess a bishop.

Going one degree higher than the first Philip, I regret to have to state that, in those non-educated days, the bride signed herself Anne Simpkinson, her X mark. She was the mother of our first Philip Warlow, the short-lived possessor of the estates, whose own wife, in a neat properly-attested form, had a rather remarkable double name, Julia Waller-Radclyffe. We were not able to find the baptismal register of the second Philip, son of Philip and Julia Warlow; but then he would not necessarily be baptised in the church where his parents were married. But we came upon a register of birth, which at once arrested my eye, first, because the unusual name of Waller-Radclyffe occurred which I had just noticed in the volume of the marriage registers; and next, on account of a certain remarkable peculiarity which the entry presented. This will be understood if I copy the normal entry of my friend of the Temple, the *tertius* Philip, which ran thus:

Date.	Name.	Father's and Mother's Names.	Surname.	Occupation.	Minister.
May 10, 1857	Philip	Philip and Louisa Matilda	Warlow	Manufacturer	J. Beavan

The entry which arrested my attention was:

Date.	Name.	Father's and Mother's Names.	Surname.	Occupation.	Minister.
May 14, 1824	Philip	Julia Waller-Radclyffe	—	—	J. Beavan

Here the reader will perceive that there was the curious omission of the name of the father.

The rector of the church where this entry was had accompanied us into the vestry. Properly speaking, we ought to have applied to him for any extract, but we had obtained permission to search

the registers in the presence of an official. I expect the rector was present to protect his own interests, for I think we had to pay a shilling for every year that we went back. This put a few sovereigns in the rector's pocket, and, to say the truth, he looked as if he rather wanted them. It

was a bit of loot which fell to a profession where very little loot is to be had. I was very much struck with the look of this man, a grave, homely, careworn face, which nevertheless had an expression of sagacity and humour.

I drew the attention of the rector to the singular form of entry, and asked him if he knew what it meant.

'Well, it might mean one of two things,' he answered. 'It might mean that old John Beavan got a little careless over his work, and did not properly complete his entry. Perhaps he got riled by the double name. Beavan could not abide affectation. One day there was a child to be baptised, and the name was given, "Carolina Wilhelmina." Beavan quietly took it up in his arms, and said, "Mary, I baptise thee." When they got into the vestry to have the register attended to, Beavan told the father that he hoped he did not mind, as it was all for the best. "O, I don't mind," said the father, "only you will have taught my child to be a regular liar. Why, when she grows up and has to learn the Catechism, she will be asked, "Who gave you your name?" and she will have to say, "My god-fathers and godmothers;" which will be all a lie, as parson gave her the name, and nobody else.' I think Beavan caught it then.'

'And what became of Mr. Beavan?'

'O, he died, poor fellow! He got an exchange to an easy country living; but he missed Manchester, and died off.'

'But is there not another explanation for this singular entry?'

'Certainly there is, the usual sad one. To all intents and purposes this seems the entry of the birth of an illegitimate child.'

Now certainly it had occurred

to us that there might be the chance of a *bar siniter* somewhere high up in the pedigree; but that Philip Warlow himself could be illegitimate was a suspicion that had never occurred to us, nor did it appear at all likely to be a correct one.

'The combination of names is an unusual one,' said Jones to me; 'but there is nothing in the world to identify this Julia Waller-Radclyffe of 1824 with the young woman who married Philip *primus* in 1826, even if we suppose that a Waller-Radclyffe could have misconducted herself.'

Jones Jones made a few further inquiries by some ferrety secret ways peculiar to himself, and he certainly seemed to get an inkling of the outskirts of some mystery. But he was baffled in penetrating it. He was very good at sketching out imaginary cases, which he said might afford 'a working hypothesis.'

'Suppose,' he argued, 'that this Philip Warlow had picked up, say, with a governess or some other young lady of good family, and, after inducing her to live with him for a time, had done the right thing and married her, then we should have the solution of the mystery. And suppose the first-born son had found out the cruel secret of his birth, and had a life-long struggle to evade its legal consequences—eh, Mr. Evelyn?'

And he got hold of one or two circumstances which certainly seemed to favour this idea. But there was no evidence on which you could hang a cat, to use his own emphatic language. Finally, he tried to pump the old woman still further. But the old woman, having taken too much or too little gin, became maudlin and repentant. She turned upon Jones Jones with all the language of

abuse and opprobrium, and declared that she had written off to Squire Warlow to let him know that there was a private detective making inquiries about him, and advising Squire Warlow to 'take the law of him.'

'If the old beldame has really done that,' said Jones Jones, as we sat together in my rooms after our return to town, 'I am not certain that it is not the best thing that can have been done for us. There is one person who knows our case thoroughly, knows its strength and knows its weakness, and that is Philip Warlow himself. If there is a legal point against him, depend upon it he has scrutinised it thoroughly, and knows it in all its bearings. If there is a damaging point in the family history, he knows it, and will not be able to divest himself of the suspicion that other people may know it as well. It is the nature of murder that it will out. He can never know whether we know or don't know.'

'Always supposing that there is something to be known.'

'By Jove, I'll tip him a writ of ejectment! He will combine this with the knowledge that we have been on the scent in Manchester, and, if there is anything in it, that will bring him to his marrow-bones.'

Jones Jones then sent a polite note to Mr. Warlow, inquiring the name of his solicitor, who would accept service of a writ of an action for ejectment brought by Lady Warlow. He received a brief polite note from Mr. Warlow's solicitor, stating that he was ready to receive such writ. The writ was duly sent, and the appearance to it was immediately entered up. Then we waited for events, wondering whether anything would transpire to strengthen our case, or whether we should

have to strike our flags and ignominiously withdraw, paying all costs.

CHAPTER VII.

It was one night towards the end of this period of uncertainty that I stumbled up against young Philip *tertius* in the smoking-room of the club. He was *ingenui vultus puer ingenique pudoris*. Evidently the young fellow knew nothing of my Machiavellian designs against the repose of his family, or even of the writ of ejectment. He bore the introduction to Jones Jones with equanimity, and drew up to our little marble table to partake of coffee and a cigar.

'And how's your governor?' I inquired.

'The governor,' he replied, 'is pretty salubrious, or rather, to speak more correctly, he is not at all salubrious. I am very sorry to say he looks older, and is worried in health and, I fancy, in business matters also.'

At this point Jones Jones rose to go. He had the gumption to see that his departure might lead to confidences.

'I am sorry your father has been worried.'

This I said truly, but somewhat guiltily. The worry, as they say in the ecclesiastical courts, when an action is brought which will ruin some poor parson, was 'for his soul's health and the reformation of his manners.'

'The governor always keeps things to himself,' continued the son. 'He always was a dark horse, and always will be. He has had some letters from Manchester, our old place, where we lived once, you know, which have put him out finely.'

'That's a bore.'

'Of course it's a bore. The governor, when he's put out, does not get any the more amiable, I can assure you. But the poor old chap's got something worse than that, I find. He has been out of sorts for some time, and our doctor in the country did not make much of him. So the other day, when I was walking with the governor, he took it into his head that he would go and see the new medical baronet, whom everybody is running after just now. We were nearly an hour in the waiting-room; but luckily they had the *Times* there, and the governor had come away without having read it. I believe that they had not finished with it in the kitchen. He was called away to see Sir William, and came back in about half an hour looking as white as a ghost. It seems that the doctor told him that he had fatty degeneration of something or other. There's an awful run just now on fatty degeneration. Everybody seems to have a touch of it somewhere.'

'I am sorry, at least, to hear that your father has.'

'I have never seen the governor so quiet and subdued. He's not the same man that he used to be, and to my mind he's a deal pleasanter. By the way, that reminds me, Evelyn. The governor said that if I met you at the club, I was to ask you to come and dine with us.'

'Ask me to dine!' I could not help undiplomatically exclaiming.

'Why, yes; he certainly did, although he must know that it will be very slow for you. He desired me to say that his state of health did not allow him to give dinner-parties this season; but he would be glad to see you, if you would come and take your nutton with us. I had no idea that

you two were so chummy. When will you come? Name your day. It doesn't much matter when. The old bird will be sure to be at home for weeks to come.'

I was certainly astonished at the invitation. My imagination was all aflame with it. Of course I would go, for I felt sure that something was in the wind. Accordingly an appointment was made for an early day.

This happened on the Wednesday. The dinner was for the Monday night. I mentally went over all the contingencies as far as they suggested themselves. I felt that if ever in my life I had need of caution and alertness, I had such need that night.

It was strictly a family dinner, and the dinner was a very good one. Lucullus dined with Lucullus. Whatever bad dinners Warlow might have to eat in the world, he always had good ones in his own house. The entire family was there, and the party, though a little subdued by the father's evident state of weakness and low spirits, was still on the whole a bright and cheerful one. There was everything to disarm me of the notion that there was anything special in the banquet, or that it could be productive of any practical arrangements. Yet, somehow or other, it happened that after dinner Mr. Warlow and I were left alone, as on a previous memorable occasion.

'I can give you a glass of very good claret. I got it at Lafitte's sale this spring, and I don't think any other wine can beat it.'

We sipped the ruby liquid, and he went on in a quiet matter-of-fact way,

'I find from my solicitor that your friend, Lady Warlow, is unable to divest her mind of the idea that her daughter has a claim on the Warlow estates. She has

actually sent me a writ of ejectment.'

'She and her friends are certainly very much in earnest, Mr. Warlow.'

'As I mentioned to you on a previous occasion, Evelyn, she has certainly a colourable pretension. The limitations under the famous will are exhausted, and I admit that it is an arguable point whether I have the power to bequeath to my family, or whether they have the power to inherit from me, or whether there is a reversion to the old stock.'

He certainly had never made such a concession before.

'I am glad to hear, Mr. Warlow, that you at least think the case is arguable.'

'I will just admit that it is susceptible of argument. It is not an impostor's claim, but has a basis of its own, which nevertheless might crumble away when brought to the test of litigation.'

'O Philip Warlow, Philip Warlow,' I thought to myself, 'is it not possible that any imposture in the case may belong to you, and not to our side? Is there no consciousness of wrong, or even of crime, in your heart? Is there any dread family secret which you tremble to whisper in your dreams?'

I know not, I never knew, I never shall know. Such questions and answers have never passed in this world. The secret, if there is a secret, is for ever locked in that inscrutable breast.

'Let me hope that you are coming back to my idea of compromising the case, Mr. Warlow.'

'The expenses of litigation in such a case as this would be enormous, and the one certainty of the law is that there is always an element of uncertainty respecting its ultimate decisions. I am not so young as I was, and my life is by no means so good as it might be

supposed to be. I should be sorry to leave my family a heritage of confusion and litigation. These things make me ask what terms Lady Warlow would be disposed to be contented with. They must be quite moderate, if they are to receive any discussion at all; and I need hardly say that our present discussion, to use the legal phrase, is entirely without prejudice.'

'Well, Mr. Warlow, I am quite in a position to offer you definitive terms on the part of Lady Warlow. I hold a power of attorney from her. I take it that the value of these estates is some twenty thousand a year or so?'

Warlow only bowed.

'If Lady Warlow had had the happiness to possess a son, she could not have offered such terms as she is now prepared to accept. But being left only with a daughter, she will waive the substance of the territorial claim. Nevertheless, as her daughter represents the elder line, she cannot wholly abandon it. She leaves you the park and the bulk of the estates, but she claims the old castle.'

He visibly winced.

'Warlow Castle alone would be of very little use to her. It would be a white elephant.'

'Of course we know that. Then we must claim the Home Farm, which comes up to the castle walls, and which may be worth eight hundred a year.'

Here I paused, and there was a dead silence for a minute.

'I do not call that demand immoderate. I might be disposed to treat on some such basis as that. But why not take a money commutation for the castle? A large sum of ready-money would be of much more use to the young lady than that dilapidated ruin.'

I watched my man with all my heart and eyes. In a moment of intuition I felt sure that I read

terror and concession in his look and accent. I prepared to strike my grand coup.

'Of course the young lady, in surrendering what she considers her birthright, will require a large sum of ready-money. In addition to the castle and the farm, her advisers demand a sum of one hundred thousand pounds.'

'Never!' exclaimed Philip Warlow; and he sprang to his feet. But he had hardly done so when a ghastly pallor overspread his cheek, and he sank back again in his chair wrestling with pain.

'For Heaven's sake, Mr. Evelyn, a glass of brandy—quick, quick!'

He drank the brandy, and swayed to and fro moaning; and then the painful spasm left him as suddenly as it had come.

'I am not able to fight this case out,' he murmured: 'it would kill me. I must compromise it at once. I could not lay my head on my pillow to-night, if I left it uncompromised.'

It seemed to me that these words were said to himself, and were not meant for me.

There was a Lord Chancellor, who, when riding out one day, heard that a great appointment in his gifts was vacant, which he had always intended for his son. He immediately got off his horse, went into a bookseller's shop, and made the appointment at once, in case he should die before he got home.

This sort of feeling was apparently actuating Mr. Warlow.

'Mr. Evelyn,' he said very quietly, 'if you will write me out an understanding, specifying the terms you have mentioned, I will give you a similar document, and write you your cheque at once.'

Silently and swiftly we each made the agreed memorandum.

He handed me a cheque. It was the heaviest which I had ever touched. I have known of heavier, but this is the heaviest I have ever seen.

B
A 005232

London, March 21, 187-.

To the Agent of the BANK OF ENGLAND,
Burlington Gardens.

STAMP.

Pay Lady Warlow (in full of all demands) or Order the sum of one hundred thousand pounds.

£100,000.

PHILIP WARLOW.

This narrative need not be protracted any further. Laura is now the acknowledged lady of the castle. I have obtained the reward which I should best desire. Philip Warlow, in spite of fatty degeneration, still goes about, and the world thinks that it is a

good thing for him that he has entirely settled a dangerous claim. There is even a talk of his being raised to the peerage. In that case I have a shrewd idea who will come forward to contest his division of the shire.

HALF-HOURS WITH SOME OLD AMBASSADORS.

II.

METTERNICH, NAPOLEON, AND MARIA LOUISA.

CANNING, in a confidential letter to Lord Grenville, once said of Metternich, 'He is the greatest rogue and liar on the Continent, perhaps in the civilised world.' In all probability, Metternich would have been by no means displeased with this testimonial to character, for if notoriety be the breath of life to the diplomatist, here surely was notoriety sufficient to satisfy any one. The Austrian statesman would have taken the language of Canning to mean that he had shuffled the diplomatic cards so well as to earn a name for himself for skilfulness and dexterity. And shallow as Metternich undoubtedly was, there were moments in his life when he was considered to have outwitted the Great Napoleon himself. He succeeded because he cultivated the arts of society to the highest degree. He possessed the charm of a brilliant and inexhaustible conversation, his manners were easy and graceful, and his flattery was so delicate and insinuating as to enable him to be all things to all men. He had little ardour, his sympathies were few and restricted, and he had no convictions—which indeed he regarded rather as an embarrassment. But, as a contemporary said of him, he had a clear head and a firm hand; he could keep his own secret, and worm out the secrets of others. While he could make himself the most agreeable man in the world, he plotted in the midst of smiles, manœuvred in a dance, and struck

the hardest when he seemed to yield the most. To a conscientious sovereign—one, that is, who could not do his own lying—he was simply invaluable.

Metternich's diplomatic abilities became at an early age so very conspicuous, that when only thirty years old he was sent as ambassador to Berlin, where he assisted in the arrangement of that well-known coalition which was dissolved by the battle of Austerlitz. After the conclusion of the peace of Presburg, he was promoted to the highest diplomatic appointment in the gift of the Emperor of Austria, viz. that of Minister to the Court of Napoleon. The French Emperor, astonished at the unusually rapid rise of the young Ambassador, said, 'You are very young to represent so powerful a monarchy.' With that readiness which always distinguished him, Metternich replied, 'Your Majesty was not older at Austerlitz.' The 'terror of Europe' was too pleased with the compliment to test its accuracy by comparing dates. His wit frequently got the better of the soldier; indeed, the latter was more hoodwinked by the clever young Austrian than by any other foreign representative at his Court.

At the age of thirty-six Metternich was appointed Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, and it was during his tenure of this office that he carried out the scheme of a marriage between

Napoleon and the Austrian Archduchess Maria Louisa, as a means of staving off the impending fate of the southern empire. The secret documents in connection with this marriage have recently come to light, and the story is so interesting that we include it in the present series of papers.

Napoleon had resolved upon divorcing the Empress Josephine, on the ground that his marriage with her was without canonical authority, and there was some talk of his espousing one of the Russian Grand Duchesses. Suddenly the Court of Vienna was fluttered by the tidings that Napoleon desired to negotiate a marriage with the Austrian Archduchess—a report which was at first regarded as a fantastic dream. The rumour, however, speedily received confirmation.

It appears from Metternich's *Memoirs*, that at a masked ball at Cambacérès', to which Princess Metternich received a pressing invitation, a mask, in whom she immediately recognised Napoleon, took hold of her arm, and led her into a private room at the end of the suite of apartments. Leading up to the question, the Emperor at length asked the Princess whether she thought the Archduchess Maria Louisa would accept his hand, and whether the Emperor, her father, would agree to the alliance. The Princess, much surprised by the question, said that she could not possibly answer it; whereupon Napoleon put the further question whether she (the Princess), in the place of the Archduchess, would bestow her hand upon him. Report says that the fair Austrian assured the powerful Emperor that she would refuse him; upon which the latter said, 'You are cruel; write to your husband, and ask him what he thinks of the matter.' This

she declined to do, pointing out that Prince Schwarzenberg was the person through whom he should approach the Imperial Court of Vienna. The Princess soon put Schwarzenberg, the Austrian Ambassador, in possession of the facts. Here, in Metternich's own words, is an account of what followed:

'The next morning, Prince Eugène made his appearance at Prince Schwarzenberg's, and "in the name of the Emperor, and with the knowledge of his mother, the Empress Josephine," he made the same offer, which, the Ambassador explained, he could only receive *ad referendum*.

'As soon as the courier brought me this news, I repaired to the Emperor. "Your Majesty," said I, "is here placed in a situation in which the ruler and the father can alone say yes or no. One or the other must be spoken by you, for a doubtful or hesitating answer is not possible."

'The Emperor collected himself for a moment, and then asked me what I should do in his place.

"There are cases in the life of States as with private persons," I answered, "when a third person is not able to put himself in the place of another, on whom the responsibility of a decision rests. These cases are especially those in which calculation alone is not sufficient to lead to a decision. Your Majesty is ruler and father—to you alone it belongs to consider what is your duty."

"I shall leave the decision in my daughter's hands," cried the Emperor warmly; "for I will never constrain her, and I desire, before I consult my duty as a monarch, to know what is her wish in the matter. Find the Archduchess, and let me know what she says to you. I will not myself speak to her on the sub-

ject, lest it should seem as if I wished to influence her decision."

"I went at once to the Archduchess Maria Louisa, and laid the matter before her without circumlocution or fine phrases, either for or against the proposal. The Archduchess listened with her usual calmness, and, after a moment's reflection, asked me, "What does my father wish?"

"The Emperor," I replied, "has commissioned me to interrogate your Imperial Highness as to your decision in a matter so important for the destiny of your whole life. Do not ask what the Emperor wishes; tell me what you wish."

"I only wish what it is my duty to wish," answered the Archduchess; "where the interest of the empire is concerned, that interest must be consulted, and not my will. Ask my father to consult his duty as a ruler, and to subordinate to that any interests connected with my person."

"When I reported this result of my mission to the Emperor, he said to me, with that perfect openness which was usual to him in the most difficult circumstances, "I am not surprised at what you tell me from my daughter; I know she is too good for me to expect her to do otherwise. Whilst you have been with her, I have been thinking how to decide. My consent to the marriage would secure to the empire some years of political peace, which I can devote to the healing of its wounds. All my powers are devoted to the welfare of my people; I cannot, therefore, hesitate in my decision. Send a courier to Paris, and say that I accept the offer for the hand of my daughter, but with the express reservation that on neither side shall any condition be attached to it; there are sacrifices which must not be contami-

nated with anything approaching to a bargain."

Metternich affirms that this is the truth with regard to the marriage. In the language of the Archduchess, however, there is no trace of that sentiment which we usually expect from a girl of eighteen in view of the most momentous event of her life, while there is a good deal of what may be called state policy. Doubtless she was dazzled by the offer to become the consort of a man whose name was upon every tongue, and who was virtually autocrat of the whole of Europe. The Princess (then Countess) Metternich, writing to her husband from Paris on the 3d of January 1810, gave him an account of her presentation to Napoleon and the Empress at Malmaison. The Emperor was most cordial towards her, and spoke flatteringly of her husband. The Empress herself spoke to the Princess in an extraordinarily cool manner, considering that it was her own deposition, and the advancement of a young rival in the Emperor's affections, of which she discoursed. 'I have a plan,' she said, 'which occupies me entirely, the success of which alone could make me hope that the sacrifice I am about to make will not be a pure loss; it is that the Emperor should marry your Archduchess. I spoke to him of it yesterday, and he said his choice was not yet fixed; but he believes that this would be his choice, if he were certain of being accepted by you.' The astonished listener assured the Empress that for herself individually she should regard this marriage as a great happiness, but could not help adding that it would be painful for an Archduchess of Austria to establish herself in France. The Empress then became more frank as to Napoleon's purposes, remarking

to the Austrian Princess, 'It must be represented to your Emperor that his ruin and that of his country is certain if he does not consent, and it is perhaps the only means of preventing the Emperor from making a schism with the Holy See.' There was no beating about the bush now; all was made quite apparent. Napoleon, anxious to curry favour with Austria as regards his suit, paid flattering attentions to the Princess Metternich. As for Metternich himself, while seeming to hold aloof from the marriage, he was unquestionably desirous of seeing the scheme carried out. In a letter to his wife, he thus expressed himself with almost brutal frankness on the duty of Royal princesses to stifle their affections, and sell themselves for the good of the State. 'Our princesses are little accustomed to choose their husbands from affection, and the respect due to the wish of a father, from a child so good and well brought up as the Archduchess, makes me hope that there will be no obstacle on her part. I shall, then, consider myself authorised to bring forward this question the same day the attitude of the Emperor of the French warrants me in doing so; and there is no reason why you should not reply to the Empress Josephine's proof of confidence in you by confessing this secret to her.'

Metternich was a little afraid, however, that the negotiations might fall through, and was decomposed at the idea that after all the Imperial prize might be won by one of the Russian Grand Duchesses. Writing to Prince Schwarzenberg, he observed, 'We cannot suppose, after all they have said to us, that it has not entered into the intentions of the Court of France to ally itself with the Imperial House of Austria. Following a very simple calculation,

and referring to the great publicity which has been given to the demand said to have been made in Russia, and the secret ways that are followed with us, one might perhaps be authorised to suppose that the direct views are now on our side; but all calculations are useless in a transaction of this kind with Napoleon, and we can only follow a calm and uniform course, the result of which must, in one way or another, turn to our advantage.' And he goes on to say that the Austrian Emperor, 'to whom the good of his people will always be the supreme law, will not hesitate to make his august daughter a guarantee of relations which will insure the repose and prosperity of his monarchy.' In a further communication to Schwarzenberg, we are told that as soon as her father opened to her the possibility of Napoleon seeking her hand, the Archduchess Maria Louisa only saw another opportunity of displaying the most absolute devotion to her beloved father. She felt all the force of the sacrifice; but her filial love outweighed all secondary considerations, so that her consent might be regarded as certain, whenever it was formally asked for. Napoleon's threats against the Pope made the situation very embarrassing, and really had much to do in binding the cause of the Church of Rome to the arrangement of the marriage.

But when the union was at length finally arranged, Metternich felt that so important an event would cause great uneasiness in many states of Europe. 'But it will be received with joy,' he wrote to the Austrian Ambassador in Paris, 'in other parts of the Continent. Russia, Prussia, and the Ottoman Porte will see more or less, in a family alliance between the two Emperors, an en-

the abandonment of Austria to the French system. The Court of St. Petersburg, calculating our policy from her own point of view, will discover a system of conquest to indemnify us for our losses. The other two Powers will be afraid that certain parts of their dominions will excite our covetousness. The wishes of his Majesty are limited to the hope of being able to gain, by the immense sacrifices he has made, some years of repose, and the possibility of healing many wounds caused by the constantly-renewed struggles of the last few years.' At the same time, Metternich did not deceive himself that there was a great difference between the marriage with an Austrian princess and the abandonment by the Emperor Napoleon of the system of conquests. But the very fact of his marriage was an impediment to the rapidity of his destructive progress, since the people subject to the authority of Napoleon believed they saw in it a pledge of peace. Austria herself undertook to reassure Prussia and the Ottoman Porte, and the retreat of the troops from Germany and the Illyrian provinces served to this end. Russia was the Power most alarmed by the announcement of the marriage, and Count Schouvaloff was absolutely terrified at the news.

Preparations for the grand *fêtes* were now commenced, and orders were given that these should be on a scale of great magnificence, in view of the well-known love of display which animated Napoleon. But the French Emperor must first 'be off with the old love, before he was on with the new.' So the divorce from Josephine was completed with all form and legal ceremony. Subsequently a singular scene was enacted at the Palace of the Tuileries.

On the 15th of December 1809, Cambacérès, Prince Arch-Chancellor of the French Empire, attended by order of Napoleon at the Tuileries, where he found assembled in the Grand Cabinet his Majesty the Emperor and King, her Majesty the Empress, and their Majesties the Kings of Holland, Westphalia, and Naples; his Imperial Highness the Prince Viceroy; the Queens of Holland, Westphalia, Naples, and Spain; Madame and her Imperial Highness the Princess Paulina. Napoleon, addressing the Prince Arch-Chancellor, informed him that he had summoned him for the purpose of communicating to him 'the resolution which I and the Empress, my dearest consort, have taken.' Having expressed his satisfaction that the august company of kings and queens, &c., were present to hear his declaration, the Emperor proceeded:

'The policy of my monarchy, the interest and the wants of my people, which have constantly guided all my actions, require that after me I should leave to children, inheritors of my love for my people, that throne on which Providence has placed me; notwithstanding, for several years past I have lost the hope of having children by my marriage with my well-beloved consort, the Empress Josephine. This it is which induces me to sacrifice the sweetest affections of my heart, to attend to nothing but the good of the State, and to wish the dissolution of my marriage.

'Arrived at the age of forty years, I may indulge in the hope of living long enough to educate in my views and sentiments the children which it may please Providence to give me. God knows how much such a resolution has cost my heart; but there

is no sacrifice beyond my courage, when it is proved to me to be necessary for the welfare of France. I should add that, far from having any reason to complain, on the contrary, I have reason only to be satisfied with the attachment and the affection of my well-beloved consort: she has adorned fifteen years of my life, the remembrance of which will ever remain engraven on my heart; she was crowned by my hand. I wish she should preserve the rank and title of Empress; but, above all, that she should never doubt my sentiments, and that she should ever regard me as her best and dearest friend.'

Napoleon having concluded, it was now the Empress's turn to take part in the scene of her own humiliation. Her language will best show the complete and powerful hold which *le petit caporal* had obtained over her. 'By the permission of our dear and august consort,' said the Empress, 'I ought to declare that, not preserving any hope of having children, which may fulfil the wants of his policy and the interests of France, I am pleased to give him the greatest proof of attachment and devotion which has ever been given on earth. I possess all from his bounty. It was his hand which crowned me; and, from the height of the throne, I have received nothing but proofs of affection and love from the French people. I think I prove myself grateful in consenting to the dissolution of a marriage which heretofore was an obstacle to the welfare of France, which deprived it of the happiness of being one day governed by the descendants of a great man, evidently raised up by Providence to efface the evils of a terrible revolution, and to reëstablish the altar, the throne, and social order. But the disso-

lution of my marriage will in no degree change the sentiments of my heart. The Emperor will ever have in me his best friend. I know how much this act, demanded by policy and by interests so great, has chilled his heart; but both of us exult in the sacrifice which we make for the good of the country.'

Such were the sentiments put into the mouth of the Empress, and uttered by her. The act of renunciation having been completed on both sides, the Prince Arch-Chancellor drew up a *procès verbal* to serve and avail according to law. The matter then came before the Senate, who—having seen the *projet* of the *senatus consultum*, and having heard the motives of the said *projet*, the orators of the Council of State, and the report of the special committee appointed for the investigation of the matter—decreed as follows:

'I. The marriage contracted between the Emperor Napoleon and the Empress Josephine is dissolved. II. The Empress Josephine shall preserve the title and rank of empress-queen crowned. III. Her dowry is fixed at an annual income of two millions of francs, on the revenue of the State. IV. All the assignments which may be made by the Emperor in favour of the Empress Josephine, on the funds of the civil list, shall be obligatory on his successors. V. The present *senatus consultum* shall be transmitted by a message to his Imperial and Royal Majesty.'

Bonaparte, on the 27th of February ensuing, announced by a message to the French Senate that he had despatched his cousin, the Prince of Neufchâtel, to Vienna, to demand for him the hand of the Archduchess Maria Louisa, daughter of the Emperor

Francis II., according to a contract that had been made, and of which the conditions were to be laid before them. It has been well remarked that of all the dreams of human greatness suddenly thrust, by the caprice of Fortune, upon a youthful princess, none certainly was ever more gorgeous or surprising than that which made Maria Louisa, then in her nineteenth year, the bride of the great soldier of fortune, who seemed to be not only the sovereign paramount of France, but the master of continental Europe. The period was one when the military glories of the Empire had ripened into all that conquest and luxury could bestow. In Paris were collected the spoils of all nations save one, and the princes of all nations save one. 'Within sixteen years of that fatal and atrocious day when the innocent blood of Marie Antoinette flowed in the Place de la Révolution, amidst the infuriated cries of the French populace, another Austrian Archduchess passed that spot, hailed by the acclamations of that same people as the bride of Napoleon, and the future mother of a race of emperors.' The marriage was first solemnised by proxy at Vienna on the 11th of March, the Archduke Charles receiving the hand of his niece as the representative of Bonaparte.

The marriage excited the greatest interest throughout Europe; and the feasts, the balls, the shows, the poetry, and the addresses and other pieces in prose to which it gave rise, were endless. From Vienna to Compiègne, the road by which the Princess passed, seemed to be strewn with flowers. Paris almost leaped for joy. The civil ceremony in Paris took place on the 1st of April, and the religious ceremony followed. The robe in which the Empress appeared at the festival

was so magnificent as to beggar description. It was embroidered all over with diamonds, and the intervals were filled with Malines lace, its value being estimated at 500,000 francs (about 22,000*l.* sterling). On the four interior fronts of the triumphal arch of L'Etoile were twelve emblematic medallions. The first, on the south front, represented the Emperor, with this inscription underneath: 'The happiness of the world is in his hands.' The second was the cipher of the Emperor and Empress, the inscription being: 'We love her from our love of him; we love her for herself.' The third, a Cupid holding a helmet, &c.: 'She will charm the leisure hours of the hero.' The fourth, a tree: 'He is the author of our glory; he will render it eternal.' The fifth, a sun, rainbow, &c.: 'She announces to the earth days of serenity.' The sixth, an animal, &c. The seventh, on the north front, the Empress: 'She will be to the French a tender mother.' The eighth, the cipher of the Emperor and Empress: 'We owe to him the happiness of the august spouse, who has given him so exalted a place in her thoughts.' The ninth, the Seine: 'His love will recognise the gift he has made us.' The tenth, the Danube: 'He enriches us with what he most dearly values.' The eleventh, the arms of the Empire. The twelfth, the arms of Austria. The illuminations were upon the most gorgeous and costly scale.

The *Times* of April 11, 1810, in describing the marriage, did not mince its phrases in speaking of the man before whom all Europe bowed with sickening adulation as to a demi-god. After an account of the more essential portion of the ceremony, the closing details were thus described: 'High mass was then performed, during

which the happy couple took the sacrament, and were repeatedly perfumed with incense and sprinkled with holy water. During the "Propitiare," the Emperor and Empress kneeled on the cushions placed for them at the foot of the altar, under a canopy of silver brocade, held over them by the Archbishop of Rohan and the Bishop of Versailles. The Imperial ruffian and his spouse again knelt at the "Ita missa est;" and after another application of the holy water, and then kissing the corporale (the fine linen in which the sacrament is put), the "Te Deum" was sung, and the procession returned to the Imperial apartments; and thus terminated one of the most abominable profanations of the solemn offices of Christianity recorded in modern history.

English writers, at any rate, declined to join in the chorus of acclamation with which this marriage was received. 'It was at first generally, indeed almost universally, imagined,' said one contemporary commentator, referring to the new Empress, 'that she was an unwilling, though resigned, victim to the preservation of her family from further humiliation, if not total ruin—another virgin of Gilead (daughter of Jephtha), obedient to the call of filial reverence and duty. No such thing! It soon appeared how much of the blood of Lorraine flowed in her veins. She was gay, lively, and almost playful, and delighted with her conquest over a man who had conquered the world. But while the face of France and its dependencies seemed to be brightened up with joy, the friends of humanity and the well-wishers to established monarchies and the order of things deplored the humiliation of Austria, and execrated the servility of the fallen Archduke

Charles. The sacrifice of Iphigenia in Aulis scarcely cost more tears to assembled Greece than that of Maria Louisa to the usurper of the throne of France—France, of which so near a relation perished, at so recent a period, as the murdered Queen!

Metternich had now attained the fulfilment of his wishes; but for an incredibly brief space of time only was that peace, upon which he had speculated, vouchsafed to Austria. It was the fate of Maria Louisa to furnish a severe lesson upon the mutability of human greatness and grandeur. Lifted suddenly upon the pinnacle of the world's regard, and with every gift of Fortune thrown into her lap, it would have been regarded as sheer madness had any one ventured to predict that her reign of glory would extend over only three short years. Her marriage was the immediate consequence of the repudiation of the Empress Josephine, which, however it may be glossed over, is one of the numerous dark blots upon Napoleon's fame; and the Archduchess was cognisant of the fact that the rights and dignities she enjoyed as a wife and an Empress had been unlawfully filched from another. But in their hours of triumph, monarchs are forgetful of the steps by which they have risen, and regardless of that fickle public opinion which defies them to-day and is prepared to sacrifice them to its wrath to-morrow. Secure in her new-born splendours, Napoleon's Austrian wife little dreamed of the instability of the throne to which she was raised.

Perhaps, after all, this is scarcely to be wondered at; for how should a young and giddy girl be expected to read the horoscope of the future, when it was beyond the powers of even so experienced a diplo-

matist as Metternich himself to do so? Priding himself upon his faculty to look ahead, and his power to circumvent the other Powers of Europe, he too, in his way, pointed as strong a moral and adorned as incisive a tale as the volatile Archduchess whom he sold for the benefit of his country. His expedient of the marriage with Napoleon was a bold one apparently at the time, and carried terror into at least one mighty court in Europe; but it was a humiliating sacrifice. Knowing the character of Napoleon, as he must have done intimately, it is strange that the Princes should ever have hoped that the truce thus established between the two empires of France and Austria could possibly be a permanent one. The most intimate relations would have counted as nothing to Bonaparte if they had stood in the way, or he had conceived they stood in the way, of his schemes of aggrandizement. Accordingly, in the year 1813, after the great French catastrophe in Russia, war was once more formally declared by Austria against France. The former Power was driven to this by the haughty and overbearing character of the French Emperor.

The subsequent career of the chief persons concerned in the great act of diplomacy which we may describe as the Austrian marriage, is soon sketched. Five years after its consummation the power of Napoleon was utterly broken, and he was the prisoner of England, the Power which excited his bitterest hostility, probably from the fact that it was the only Power which had never succumbed to him. His meteor-like life came to a miserable close. As to the Empress, all seemed to augur well, when, on the 20th March 1811, her first child was born, which proved to be a son,

thus confirming the hopes of Napoleon in the desire for the transmission of his name to posterity. The child was called King of Rome. On the commencement of the campaign of 1813, Bonaparte appointed his Imperial consort regent in his absence, though under many limitations. But as her inauspicious nuptials had been preceded by the defeat of her native land at the hands of her lord, so they were not long afterwards followed by the overthrow of the country of her adoption. On the abdication of Napoleon she went to Orleans, and thence, in company with Prince Esterhazy, to Rambouillet. It is not a little singular that her misfortunes never excited the respect or the compassion of any one in Europe. The allied sovereigns on entering Paris, on the contrary, marked their consideration for the divorced Empress Josephine by their visit to Malmaison. Maria Louisa did not share the fortunes of her husband in his banishment to Elba. 'Her son became a hostage in the hands of her father, and every tie was broken which connected Maria Louisa with the greatness or the misfortunes of him who had shared with her his self-won throne. A strange insensibility to the past, a selfish nature, and an ignoble second marriage, completed the bathos of her unequal life, which ended as if the sole purpose for which she had ever existed was to dwell at ease in the little Court of Parma, and to obey the Italian policy of Prince Metternich. Her administration of these principalities was, of course, Austrian; but she had introduced many of the institutions which have proved most beneficial in Lombardy, and her subjects were, at least, free from onerous contributions to the finances of the empire.' It was

in the year 1816 that Maria Louisa received the Duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla, and the nobleman with whom she contracted a morganatic marriage was the Count von Neipperg. The Archduchess died at Parma, on the 17th December 1847, at the age of fifty-six. Her body was conveyed to Vienna, and placed in the Imperial vault at the church of the Capuchins, by the side of that of her son, the Duke de Reichstadt.

Metternich lived to a great age. After his share in the Austrian marriage, he conducted the course of Austrian diplomacy through the critical years 1812-13. Maintaining at first a temporising policy, and a scheme of an armed mediation of Austria, he was obliged to abandon this through the resolute and obstinate attitude of Napoleon. He resolved upon now adopting a decided step, and, in August 1813, accordingly declared war against France, being little more than three years after he had warmly welcomed the French alliance. Metternich's ability was, perhaps, most signally displayed in the negotiations which ended in the completion of the quadruple alliance. On the field of Leipzig the Emperor of Austria conferred upon him the title of Prince. Upon the assembling of the Congress of Vienna, Metternich was unanimously chosen President. From this time forward he was a great diplomatic power in Europe. Alarmed at the consequences of the French Revolution, the leading European statesmen conceived the idea of the Holy Alliance—a combination the chief of whose objects were to suppress all popular institutions, to annihilate freedom of speech and action, and to establish a despotic power in such countries as should favour the scheme of the

Alliance. England, under the lead of Canning, protested against this Alliance, and she stood forward alone as the champion of constitutional liberty. Eventually the Holy Alliance fell before the wave of public opinion.

The Austrian statesman has been severely criticised for his policy during that period which witnessed the rapid development of Russian ascendancy in the East, and for his share in the Treaty of Adrianople, which put the Principalities and the Danube under the control of the Northern Power. He was too preoccupied, however, with the Frankenstein of France to note in what direction affairs nearer home were tending. By the time the French Revolution of 1830 occurred, it became evident how enormously Russian influence in Europe had increased. Many of the other continental Powers now rallied round Russia, regarding her as a bulwark against the advance of the democracy. Moreover, she assumed the chief place in the confederation of sovereigns banded together against France. All this was indirectly due to the policy of Metternich, although it was the last wish he had in the world to witness the Cabinet of St. Petersburg in the ascendant. The Prince now set himself to the task of preserving the existing condition of things in the Austrian dominions by the strictest measures of police, and the severest despotism. But the spirit of revolution was abroad, and the events in France of the momentous year of 1848 exercised a powerful influence throughout the whole of Europe. The Metternich policy completely failed at this crisis, and the Prince himself was obliged to flee from Vienna, and seek a friendly shelter in England. Returning to the Austrian capital in the

year 1851, the veteran Minister made a kind of Royal progress to his palace in the Rennweg. The Emperor still distinguished him by his favour, and conferred various honours upon him; but he was never again advanced to the helm of State. This was a cause of bitter disappointment to the old diplomatist, who preferred before all honours and dignities the power of controlling the policy of the Austrian Empire. His opportunity, however, had passed, and with new times and exigencies had arisen new men. But he had trodden the diplomatic stage for a longer period than any of his contemporaries.

Prince Metternich died at Vienna on the 11th June 1859, having completed his eighty-sixth

year. 'He was renowned rather than great,' wrote one, in summing up his character, 'clever rather than wise, venerated more for his age than his power, admired but not lamented.' His policy in great matters was tortuous, and invested with an air of secrecy; his abilities were incommensurate with his reputation; and he did not possess in a striking degree the sagacity and prescience which belong to the diplomatist or statesman of the first rank. There were, however, certain dramatic episodes in his career, and amongst the most interesting and important of these episodes is that which we have delineated in connection with the marriage of Maria Louisa and Napoleon.

HEARTHTRUG FARCES:

II.

SELINA'S REVENGE.

I.

'Away with your fictions of flimsy romance,
Those tissues of falsehood which folly
has wove;
Give me the mild beam and the soul-breathing glance,
And the rapture that dwells in the
first kiss of love.'

THE first scene of all, which begins this 'strange eventful history,' is laid in the back garden of a snug Bristol villa, and in a summer-house situated therein. The time is the year of grace 1850. The persons represented are Theobald Podger, Esq., aged twenty-five, and Selina Stickey, aged twenty-one. Selina is the daughter of a wealthy draper still in business, and Theobald is the son of an equally wealthy pawnbroker, retired. The two fathers have been friends for many years; but the families have only become intimate lately. The truth is that, while the fathers were in business, the draper's wife rather looked down upon the pawnbroker's wife. When, however, the pawnbroker retired, 'rolling in riches,' so it was said, the draper's wife admitted that a pawnbroker gone out of business might fairly rank with a linen-draper still in it. Accordingly the families began to consort with each other, visiting freely, walking together to and from church, and exhibiting such mutual civilities as only intimates can or will. Week by week they exchanged dinner hospitalities—Podger feeding Stickey this week, Stickey

feeding Podger the next. And at these sumptuous feasts the whole party sat down with minds as untroubled about social distinctions as if they had been all personages of the best blood, or beasts of the field, who graze and graze and never think of pedigree.

Hence this farce. For one Christmas-day, when dinner had arrived at the plum-pudding stage, Theobald, the pawnbroker's son, had a bit on his spoon, on which he was just about to fix his eyes, when these moving orbs were arrested by the eyes of Selina, which crossed their path. Theobald was slightly romantic, and wrote poetry. The Byronic fever had not at that time quite died out; and he, though a small man and very stout, wore Byron collars and ties, and read *Childe Harold*. He read *Don Juan* too; but this was privately, at night, in his bedroom; for his father, having got an inkling of the contents of that poem, had declared, apoplectically, that no son of his should go *Don Juanning* in Bristol, if he knewed it; and Theobald, being, even in his romance, a prudent young man, would not displease his father. So he kept *Childe Harold* on the drawing-room table, and *Don Juan* under his pillow. In other ways Theobald was a promising youth. He could make a sovereign go quite as far as the greatest miser in Bristol could a guinea; and if you had tried to convince him

that two and two would ever make five, your prospects of success would not have been inspiring. Thus was Theobald Podger romantic and thrifty at the same time, having an eye to Don Juan and an eye to propriety and profit too; and, as has been said, with pudding on his spoon, his eyes met the eyes of Selina. These four eyes had often met before; and so, reader, you may walk on the edge of a river for ten years quite safely, and tumble in on the first day of year eleven. Such, figuratively, was the case with Theobald Podger.

As to that bit of pudding, its spice might have been red pepper, its raisins might have been Reading gravel, for anything Theobald could have told. Conscience was suspended. When, upon the return of his faculties, he looked at his spoon, the pudding was gone; it had been, and it was not. More he did not know. But he felt two punctures in his heart—the operation of Selina's eyes, which had shot into him with the brilliancy and the sting of two bright electric sparks. He thought of Haidee, with her light poetic costume, through which the zephyrs played, and then he acknowledged that a comfortable Bristol young lady, with her frock up to her neck, might paragon the fair Greek after all. He was madly in love that moment, and did not eat another morsel. He would dare anything for sweet Selina's sake! Like Bob Acres' 'man in the play,' he felt *he could do such deeds!*

From frosty December until sunny July that passion burned, secretly, for reasons which shall soon appear. Selina saw the flame. Theobald had not told her, either by speech or ink, that he loved. He was a Bristol Don Juan, and had a method in his

madness which the original Spaniard did not possess. Theobald feared his father, and would not commit himself either with pen or tongue. But Love has three languages—the written, the spoken, and the optical. Theobald chose the optical language. He *looked* his passion. Looking your passion is a very convenient way of conveying it; for looks mean anything if you please, and if you don't please they mean nothing. Selina interpreted his looks by her own wit and liking, and she knew that Theobald was her Theobald; and if he did not know that Selina was his Selina, he had read his poetry to small purpose indeed. So matters stood when this July evening found the two seated side by side in the summer-house, while their respective mammas were in the drawing-room considering how the preserves were likely to turn out that year, and their papas were in the dining-room having '20 port. Selina had been watching Theobald with woman's eyes; and, from his expression, she concluded that he was either on the verge of a dangerous illness, or going to propose marriage. She could not for her life have told which it was.

'Selina,' Theobald murmured, 'do you know what your name means?'

'I do not,' Selina answered, in an equal murmur. Her doubt was clearing up: it was not an illness.

'Selina,' continued Theobald, in the same tender Byronic key, 'your name means the moon.'

'Does it?' Selina whispered, in yet a lower tone. A finer and surer master of love than even he who wrote *Don Juan* told her that now her words had best be few and hard to catch.

'Yes, I assure you,' Theobald

went on, 'it means the moon. I would not deceive you, Selina.'

'I know you would not deceive me,' she murmured.

'Not for all the treasures of the dark and deep-blue ocean!' Theobald said, with uplifted voice; for he forgot his prudence. 'Selina!'

'Well.'

'I love the moon, Selina.'

'Yes.'

'And—and—and—' Theobald drew his breath for a mighty effort, 'I love you, Selina!'

'Do you, Theo?' she asked artlessly. Just so Greek-eyed Haidée might have spoken; for we are all alike children of Nature when we love and when we die.

'Yes, I love you better than life—a thousand, thousand times better!' the young man said, and drew her to himself. There followed—

What? A sound, my reader. And what is it like? you ask. Such a sound I have heard just at the moment that a fond young mother bent over her baby. I have heard something like it, deep in the dark grove, bubbling from the throat of a nightingale. It is the top note in Love's whole cantata—happy they who can strike such music from the dull worn keyboard of human feeling. Rejoice, O lovers, while you may; but remember you are only actors—acting in a farce.

II.

'I do perceive here a divided duty.'

ALAS that '20 port should be so delicious and only ten glasses to the bottle! Had there been two more glasses in that particular bottle on that particular evening, what I am now to tell would not have happened. For Podger senior and Stickey senior, instead of strolling arm-in-

arm through the garden unseen, would have been still snug in chat with the table between them.

Ten glasses to the bottle, however, is the quantity fixed by Fate; and Fate also fixed that, when Theobald and Selina stole out of the arbour and back to the house, two witnesses, whom the lovers had not seen, followed their retreat with faces full of silent surprise. The two old men were still arm-in-arm, and at sight of the pair they clasped each other more closely, signifying perfect mutual confidence.

'Billy,' said Mr. Podger, 'us must put a stop to this, Billy.'

Mr. Podger, it must be said, had not been highly educated. Indeed, one of Mrs. Stickey's original objections to an intimacy was founded on the allegation that his grammar was not what the grammar of respectable people ought to be. She and her husband argued the point; but Stickey, like a true man, would not sacrifice his friend to a woman's whim. He admitted the charge of defective grammar, having himself only a few penny-weights more of that article in his composition than his friend.

'Grammar Bobby wants, I grant you,' he would say in these disputations. 'But, mark me, it's the only thing he *does* want. The fact is, a leaf was tore out of the Lindley Murray Bobby learned. But what I maintain is this, find that leaf, work it into Bobby's mind, and you won't find his feller in Bristol; no, nor ten miles round!'

Accordingly, when Bobby Podger said, 'Us must put a stop to this, Billy,' William Stickey manifested no scorn, but simply replied,

'Bound to, Bobby.'

'For why, d'y'e see?' Bobby continued argumentatively. 'Neither

me nor you wants money, Billy, and our young uns won't want money neither.'

'True for you,' remarked Mr. Stickey, for his friend had paused, as if inviting some comment.

'What me and you wants,' continued Bobby; 'or, to put it more telling, what mine and yours wants—the young uns, that is to say—is—' He paused.

'What?' William Stickey asked, not seeing that his friend, for rhetorical purposes only, waited before saying his last word.

'Blood,' replied Robert Podger, Esq., pawnbroker retired.

'Blood!' exclaimed William Stickey, wondering if the '20 port had got into his friend's head, and brought back memories of the stories of giants and other inhuman feeders of whom he had read in the days of his youth.

'Blood, I say again,' Bobby repeated stoutly. 'Deny it who can. Me and you is rich, but we don't know our grandfather's name—neither of us knows it,' Bobby said, resolved to make his friend realise their identity in this particular. 'Now there are scores of young fellers in the county as has grandfathers as long as a file of soldiers right from where me and you stand to the Norman Conquest. But these sparks hasn't half as many guineas as grandfathers. Twig, Billy?'

'You're taking me with you,' Billy answered encouragingly. 'I see the point.'

'Or put it this way,' Bobby continued fluently. 'There goes my Lord Titherby walking along the Mall. He meets me, and passes me by as if your humble servant was a blackbeetle. Now, I'll not undervalue him. He manages to keep his boots clean, however muddy the road may be; and his clothes is cut first-rate, neither crease nor wrinkle, fit like

a glove. Your humble servant, pay what he will, can't get his legs like that. Somehow, my lord's breeches look like a statoo, and your humble servant's look—well, rather squarish, Billy. You know what I mean. In the looking-glass Titherby is first and Podger second; and in the *Court Guide* Titherby is first and Podger nowhere. But stop now: in his pocket you may find one three-penny-bit, all alone like an orphan child. In *my* breeches-pocket there will be what my lord would call a banker's balance.'

'You ought to be in the town council, Bobby,' his friend said. 'There is not a man there can speak like you.'

'Never mind that now,' Bobby replied. 'It comes to this. Your Selina must marry a lord, or the next best to be had; and my Theobald shall look out for the same article, female pattern. And then we shall not have lived in vain, Billy, shall us? And we shall sit down in our old age and feel that we had something to say to the Norman Conquest after all.'

Quite overpowered at this noble picture of life's decline, William Stickey spoke nothing.

'So this little business must be stopped,' Bobby said, with his thumb over his shoulder in the direction the lovers had gone. 'No blame to them, poor things; it's nature. But for all that it must be stopped.'

'Stopped it must be!' rejoined Stickey, unable, it seemed, to add a syllable to his friend's language, and manifesting his independence of mind only by altering the order.

'And we sha'n't quarrel over it, me and you?' Bobby continued, with a trace of anxiety in his voice. 'It isn't because these two young uns fall in love that we need knock our heads together.'

'Laying our heads together

would be better than knocking 'em together,' the friend replied, smiling at this witty revision. 'We shall part *them*, Bobby, not ourselves.'

So, arm-in-arm, for they had never uncoupled, the two old fellows walked back to the house.

III.

'Prudence is a necessary ingredient in all the virtues.'

THREE months elapsed, and again Selina and Theobald were together in the arbour; but now Theobald sat cautiously apart from her, and the face of the prudent young man was careful, not amorous. Selina put her handkerchief to her eyes between each sentence that was spoken.

'So, on the whole, my dearest one,' said Theobald, edging a little farther off from her, 'we must part. My father will not hear of it. Your father will not hear of it. We must part.'

'I don't see that,' Selina whimpered. 'We are both of age; and if we were—were married—they would be sure to forgive us.'

'There you are wrong,' Theobald replied. 'My father, like Haidee's—that young woman I told you of—has a firm nature. Forgive, indeed!'

'Even if he did not,' said Selina, whimpering still prettily enough, 'we might be very happy with love in a cottage.'

'Love in a cottage,' replied Theobald, with the air of a speaker who is opening an extensive subject, 'is a very delightful thing.'

'Just what I always say,' murmured his little Selina. What a calf he was not to kiss that pout off her ripe lips!

'A delightful thing,' continued he warmly. 'But then, Selina, there is one matter which is indis-

pensable to it, and that is a cottage. Neither you nor I have got one.'

To this there was no answer, so, like a woman, Selina retreated into her pocket-handkerchief, and sobbed a piteous coaxing sob.

'Now just listen to me, Selina,' said the prudent young man. 'You have got an excellent constitution—warranted to wear well—lung, heart, and the rest all sound, have you not?'

'I have, dearest,' she murmured, wondering in her own breast if he were thinking that, should their income be small, she could eke it out by charing in Clifton. She would have done it for him in that hour. It is wonderful what love is in a woman's heart.

'I have an excellent constitution also,' Theobald continued. 'I was examined by the doctor for my insurance some time since, and he told me I had a better prospect of life than nine men out of ten. Now don't you think you have a better prospect of life than nine women out of ten, Selina?'

'I am perfectly sure of it, dearest,' she replied, resolved to aid his argument to the uttermost, though its drift she did not yet perceive.

'Very well, then; that settles the difficulty,' said he triumphantly.

'How, Theo?' she asked, in fond admiration of his undisclosed solution.

'In this way,' he answered. 'Let each of us marry another—marry, I mean, according to our parents' wishes. You marry the man of their choice; I shall marry the woman of their choice. We shall both sacrifice our feelings to our sense of duty.'

'Theobald!' she exclaimed reproachfully, and no more, for he stopped her.

'Hear me out: your constitu-

tion being so good, it is ten to one that you survive my wife. My constitution being ditto, it is ten to one I survive your husband. In the interval which we may assume will elapse, the parents will, in all probability, expire; then see where we shall be, both of us. Free, unfettered, able to join our hands and hearts; and in the gray evening twilight of existence we shall be united, and we shall sleep together in one grave at last, Selina!

'You don't mean all that?' Selina said, regarding him with wonder and commencing indignation.

'Yes; I mean every syllable of it,' he replied, not reading her face aright. 'And I maintain, Selina, that we may be very happy in our declining years. For although now, while the feverishness of passion is burning in one's blood, one may take the Don Juan view of life, still a time will come—a time *will* come, Selina—when both of us will realise the truth of "John Anderson, my Jo John." Depend upon that, Selina!'

He turned his face upon her with the smirk of one who feels he has brought his argument to a successful end.

'O you great selfish goose!' Selina cried furiously, and giving him a ringing box on the ear she darted from the arbour, and left him in solitude.

'How my head sings!' the prudent young man exclaimed, handling himself with much tenderness. 'What an arm she has got, to be sure! Well, never mind. I am out of the trap. I have said my say.'

Meanwhile, Selina, sobbing, panting, quivering, gained her own room and flung herself on her bed.

'If I wait twenty years to pay

you off, you little sneaking wretch, I shall wait twenty years; but on the day I pay you, you shall be paid in full!'

IV.

'They have their exits.'

READER, not seers of renown alone penetrate the future and forecast events; prudent young men accomplish it. Everything fell out as Theobald Podger had anticipated. He married. Selina married. In each case the full approval of their parents crowned the union. The parents themselves went quietly down life's decline. Podger the elder died, and was buried with prodigious plumage and mummery, and above his ashes rose a splendid tombstone of Aberdeen granite. Here, on an inlaid scroll, his virtues were set forth: that he was a good citizen, a good Liberal, a good Baptist, a good father, a good husband—the mourners did not say a *good grammarian*, perhaps from a fear of cracking the granite. Splendidly entombed slept Robert Podger, Esq., not with his fathers, since he never had any, but in great state all by himself. Him there followed to silence, first, his friend William Stickey; then, Mrs. Stickey; and last of all, the dowager Podger, for whom one line of the scroll had been reserved, in which she was, with brevity, described as wife of the above, but not a virtue mentioned. So all the old people departed. No more '20 port with opened windows on warm July evenings. No more prognostications about the jam for the impending season. It was all over; just as much as if it had been the toils of statesmen or the pleasures of kings. Think, my reader, what a world is this,

where even for a farce acted on a hearthrug there must be such a complex machinery of coming and going, living and dying, or the piece will not run. But now we have got through the graver interlude, the clouds roll off the tale, and it sparkles into farce once more.

V.

'... Since I saw you last
There is a change upon you.'

FIVE-AND-TWENTY years later, one warm August morning, in the stately coffee-room of a fashionable hotel in Hastings, there sat eating his breakfast what we may call the remains of Theobald Podger, Esq. 'The remains' is said advisedly, because in the space of time which has elapsed since last we saw him, Theobald has grown wondrously thin, shrunk from the diminutive plumpness of other days into a little hard man of fifty. Thin hands, thin arms, thin legs, thin face and body, thin everything. Notwithstanding this he eats his breakfast with good appetite, and makes away with bacon and eggs, toast and coffee, like a full-sized Briton. The visitors' list is in his hand, and he is running his eye down the lines.

'Goodness gracious!' he exclaimed all at once. 'She is here!'

He looked at the list more closely.

'Yes, I declare! Here—in Hastings—here in this building!'

He rang the bell, and on the appearance of the waiter pointed out a name.

'Is that lady—Mrs. Monteagle Villiers—in this house now?'

'Yes, sir. Private rooms, sir. Thirty-eight, nine, and forty, sir.'

'My dear heart!' sighed Theobald Podger, resting his chin upon his hand. 'Does she remember me, I wonder?'

Had he been in number thirty-eight at that particular moment he needed not have asked the question. Mrs. Monteagle Villiers was reading the visitors' list also, and, looking over the names at the hotel to see if her own were correctly spelled, her eyes lighted on the familiar word—'Podger.'

Mrs. Monteagle Villiers has grown very stout since she sat as Selina Stickey in that summer-house; and now she is vastly arrayed in widow's robes, and her descending capstrings remind one of the Staubach waterfall, they are so long and so fleecy white. Her face—that pretty little face!—has become large and suited to her portly frame; and the lips, where kisses played at hide-and-seek long ago, have lost their carnation—the hue has fled upwards and settled on her cheeks.

'Theobald here,' she murmured. 'How strange it is! My Monteagle removed, and his Violet removed—what a coincidence! Has he forgotten me, I wonder?'

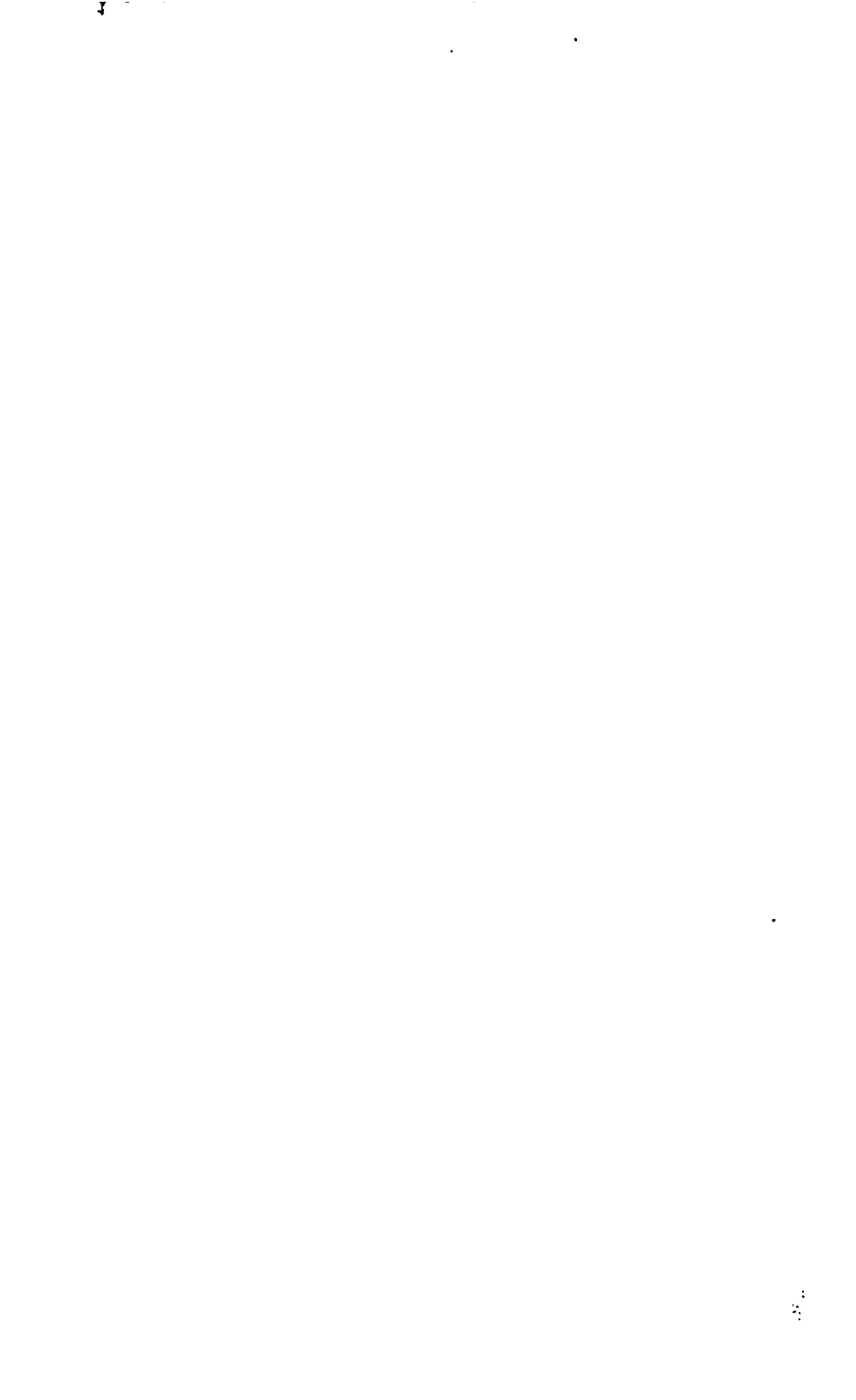
No, Selina, he has not. Half an hour later there came a knock at the door, and the waiter entered with a card.

'Gentleman would like to call on you, ma'am,' he said, with a most unprofessional note of melancholy in his voice: he must have caught it unconsciously from Theobald; 'if half after twelve will suit, ma'am.'

Leave was granted at once, and during the interval of time Mrs. Monteagle Villiers sat before her glass trying to remember what she was like twenty-five years ago, and to plan a reproduction of Selina Stickey.

'This crape is the great difficulty,' she sighed. 'That can't be got over, do what I will.'

Then she thought of Theobald: how constant he was—'*Little darling!*' she murmured. Them





'O you great selfish goose!' Selma cried furiously, and giving him a ringing box on the ear she darted from the arbour, and left him in solitude.

See 'Heartburn' Chapter 8

she remembered the summer-house and how he cast her off, and his composure and her rage, and the vow she vowed—'Old swatch!' she ejaculated. At which she clenched her fist, the very fist that made his ears ring that evening, only now a more terrible weapon by far; and with that fist in this menacing form, she said,

'Theobald, Theobald, I shall have you; but you shall pay me first!'

Punctually at half-past twelve she seated herself on the sofa at the further end of her great drawing-room; and while the silver ball of the little timepiece was still echoing the stroke of the hammer, Theobald knocked at the door.

'Come in!' she cried, in a laughing voice. Had he seen her heart, and the feminine malice there!

The door opened, and he entered. In that vast sitting-room he looked smaller than usual, and, as he timidly made his way in, she was reminded in some mysterious manner of a mouse creeping round the wainscot. He stretched her at last. Their eyes met. Their hands clasped. That was a comfort. The first shock was over, and the widower picked up his courage a little.

The next few minutes were not so painful as might have been expected; and, when the usual commonplace preliminaries of conversation had been gone through, Theobald Podger, with a sigh and a downcast look, asked,

'How long ago is it?'

'Two years and a month this very day,' the widow replied, with a pathetic application of her handkerchief.

'Mine is not quite two years yet,' replied Theobald gently. 'You got the start of me, Selina.'

'So I did, Theobald,' she answered in the same key. 'Those things are ordered for us, are they not?'

In this way a dialogue was established, which the widow, with excellent tact, guided ever nearer and nearer to the business of his bosom.

'Times have changed with both of us, Selina,' said Theobald. 'I am not the man I was, nor are you the woman you were. I mean,' he added, catching himself up hastily, 'you are not quite the woman you were, but very nearly—very, very nearly.'

'There is a change,' said the widow, with fresh pocket-handkerchief symptoms. 'Look at this.' She gracefully spread out her hands, and drew his attention to her 'suit of woe.'

'O, that of course,' cried Theobald, much more at his ease. 'That is a matter for the dress-maker. But in other respects, Selina, you are very little changed. Indeed, I might say,' he continued, with growing courage, 'you are not changed at all.'

Selina sighed anew, but she put her handkerchief aside. 'Now I am changed,' he went on, 'greatly changed. Changed in my physical frame. I only weigh nine stone. Great change that from eleven, you know, Selina! Then I am changed in my mind. I used to read Lord Byron; but of late years I have taken a fancy to Mrs. Hemans. That I venture to think, dear Selina, is not a disqualification for domestic happiness. Lord Byron was a sad dog, after all. Indeed, I am afraid that I was a sad dog myself—once! That is all over now.'

Something in Selina's eye as she glanced at him seemed to signify that if a little of this particular Byronic sadness had been left she would not have made it

KK

an insuperable obstacle. But the eyes of Selina Villiers can express two feelings at a time: she is thinking of the hour when she called him *selfish goose*, and boxed his ear. Revenge is sweet, and she means to taste it. Meanwhile, he begins his proposal of marriage. He goes through their joint biographies from infancy until now, with pious reflections appended to the salient passages, such as measles and whooping-cough. Then he comes to the present hour. Theobald has grown an eloquent speaker, and now, in offering himself to Selina for life, he expatiates over his feelings and principles. He is now, as ever, a consistent Baptist. Now, as ever, he is a member of the great Liberal party. He has become a teetotaller, and is giving his days and nights to that sacred movement. This is the being who gets down on one knee as his oration draws to an end, and says,

'Now, Selina, dear Selina, dearest Selina, breathe the one short syllable which shall seal you for ever mine.'

She breathed, but not that syllable. Steadfast and hostile was the look she fixed upon him, and in his surprise he nearly overbalanced, and had to steady himself again on his now uneasy knee.

'Theobald,' she cried severely, 'you have grown miserably thin! Do you know, I am afraid we shall look rather laughable side by side. Just stand close to me here.'

She caused her stout spherical figure to reflect itself in a mirror, while Theobald stood on her right hand.

'Just look, Theobald,' she said. 'I am like capital O beside capital I. It is very provoking.'

Theobald Podger murmured

something about 'farinaceous diet' and 'cod-liver oil three times a day;' but Mrs. Villiers would not catch at the suggestion.

'Another thing strikes me, Theobald,' she said, taking her seat again, while he stood before her humbly. 'You spoke of the great temperance cause, and fighting under the teetotal banner. Now, Theobald, I like my two glasses of sherry at lunch, and my two glasses at dinner.'

'That, my love, can be met,' Theobald remarked, with great complacency. 'You can take wine medicinally. There will be no trouble about it. We never interfere when it is taken medicinally.'

'Excuse me, Theobald,' replied Selina, with an accent of scorn which frightened him. 'I am not going to be made an invalid of for your crotchets.'

Theobald Podger was silent for fear, except that the word '*crotchets*' escaped him in a low horror-struck tone, such as might issue from the lips of one who suddenly sees a spectre.

'There is another thing,' she continued.

'A third!' he exclaimed, in most unfeigned alarm.

She smiled bitterly, but the secret of the bitterness he could not know.

'You spoke about being still a Baptist, Theobald. I have become High Church, very high. I approve of vestments. I don't object to incense. Now you are a Baptist, and I have serious doubts—very serious doubts—whether you are a Christian at all!'

Theobald jumped as if some one had pinched his leg.

'Before I could marry you, you must become a sound Churchman,' she continued firmly. 'I don't exactly know what that will in-

volve, but something will have to be done to you.'

He stood before her, terror in his eyes, but he said neither 'Yes' nor 'No.' After gazing at him for a moment, she began again:

'There is another thing.'

'Selina,' he cried, with a groan, taking out his pocket-book and tearing a leaf from it, 'don't you think you had better make a memorandum of them?'

'I shall not forget,' she sternly rejoined; 'and you shall not forget:' she added this with appalling significance. 'I say there is something more. You spoke just now of the *great Liberal party*. Theobald, there isn't such a thing. I am a Conservative!'

After this disclosure there was a long pause, which the paralysed suitor did not dare to break. Mrs. Villiers rose from her sofa and walked majestically to the window, and there, turning round upon him, she asked,

'Have you nothing to say?'

'A great deal,' he replied submissively. 'But truly, Selina, I don't know where to begin. Let me see; which was number one?'

'Theobald,' she cried, 'do you want to marry me?'

'Yes, Selina,' he answered, 'I do.'

'Very well, then,' she replied, in tones more terrible than ever; 'you must do what I bid you. Are you ready? Will you obey me?'

'I will,' he answered, as if it were the marriage vow.

'First, in respect of your size. You must manage somehow to alter your present appearance, which is, to be quite plain with you, nothing less than absurd. You must grow stout. You must take Du Barry's Revalenta three times a day, and whatever else will get you in flesh. I could never marry a lath—a living lath.'

'I hope the Revalenta isn't very like physic,' said Theobald despairingly.

'Never mind what it is like,' she answered; 'you have got to take it if you take me. Secondly, with regard to your total abstinence. You must drink an imperial pint of Guinness's stout every day at lunch, three glasses of old port at your dinner, and a tumbler of brandy-and-water going to bed.'

'But I have taken the pledge!' Theobald muttered.

'Then you must untake it,' retorted the lady. Her English might be doubtful, but her meaning was not. 'Next,' she said, touching her third finger, 'as to your religious opinions. You must attend matins every morning at eight o'clock, and go to church three times every Sunday. You must promise never to set your foot inside a chapel again, and you must become a Churchman. Whatever the vicar considers necessary to finish you off, you must do. Do you understand?'

'But I am a deacon in our chapel!' pleaded Theobald. 'It is an important office, and very honourable. Don't ask me to give that up, Selina. I should rather compromise the matter by taking a little stimulant extra, if that would meet your views, love. You see,' he repeated, 'I am a deacon!'

'Deacon indeed!' she retorted, with infinite scorn. 'As if a Dissenter *could* be a deacon! Deacons are always very nice young men—fresh and modest and pleasant to look at—not the least like you, Theobald. Now, church or chapel; which do you choose? I shall never ask you twice.'

'Church,' he groaned. 'But just consider—'

'I have considered,' she answered, in a voice that bereft him

of all hope. Then, checking off her fourth finger, she said, 'Now for the last thing; you must become a Conservative.'

'How can I, Selina?' he asked.

'You must read the political articles in the *Standard* day after day,' she replied, 'never missing a day, never missing a line. At the end of each article you must ask yourself, "Are these my opinions?" If not, you must make them yours. This must go on until you are converted.'

'I hope it won't be very long,' he exclaimed. 'O Selina, I remember Lord Byron says:

"Alas, the love of woman, it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing."

I never understood these lines till to-day !'

'And now,' she said, not noticing this tribute to her love and womanliness, 'you are to be on your trial. You must go to Bath, and take lodgings there for three months, and put yourself under treatment. Once a week you must write to me and report. If at the end of that time you are stouter, and can drink your wine like other people, and have shaken off those horrid Baptists, and are a true Conservative, I will—'

'Marry me?' he asked eagerly.

'I will consider you,' she replied coldly.

'Well, Theobald,' Mrs. Villiers said to herself when her admirer withdrew, 'five-and-twenty years ago I asked you to have me, and you said no because your father would not let you. I think my turn has come, I *think* it has ! But you shall give up your teetotalism, your dissent, your Radicalism, and you shall improve your figure, before I change my name for yours. He that will not when he may—shall suffer for it.'

VI.

'The promised end.'

THE remainder of the story can be told best by letters and extracts :

'Bath, Aug. 7, 1875.

'My dearest Selina,—I write in tolerable spirits. I am going on with the treatment. I find rushing out in the morning at quarter to eight very trying to my digestion, but I persevere for thy sake.—Ever affectionately,

'THEOBALD PODGER.'

'Aug. 14.

'My Love and Life,—I have great news for you this week. I can drink my stout without making a face.—Ever your own,

'T. P.

'P.S. I scarcely knew where I was when I went to bed last night; but I woke all right in the morning, and somehow I rather like it. This is encouraging.'

'Aug. 21.

'Queen of my Soul,—As I was reading the *Standard* this morning, light suddenly flashed upon me. I begin to see that Gladstone is a gigantic impostor, though eloquent. Let us be truly thankful.—Ever until we meet, and then for ever, your

'THEO.'

'Aug. 28.

'Mine for ever,—I can scarcely believe what I am going to write to you, but it is true. Last night before dinner I was weighed, and this morning again after breakfast. In the night I had gained one ounce and a quarter. My brain is spinning with joy. Thus are our difficulties one by one removed. Eager to claim the reward of true love, I am, Selina,—dear familiar name !—thine, living and dying,

'TEBBY.'

Extract from the *Times* newspaper: 'On Saturday, September 10, at St. George's, Hanover-

square, Theobald Podger, Esq., of Appletree Hall, Dyrham Down, son of the late William Podger, Esq., of Bristol and Clifton, to Selina, widow of the late Mont-eagle Villiers, Esq., and only daughter of Robert Stickey, Esq., merchant of Bristol.'

'Theobald,' said the bride, as they stood in the hotel drawing-room on the evening of that happy day, and as once again she saw her own circular and his linear figure reflected in the mirror, 'you have done all but one thing. We shall never be truly a pair.'

'What do you mean?' he gasps, thinking of the sensation novels which she is fond of reading. 'Is there any barrier—unknown to me?'

'You don't understand me, Tebby,' she answered. 'I mean in the sense that vases are a pair, or ponies, or gloves. We sha'n't match, I say, Tebby, so as to be a pair.'

'It matters not, my bride,' he cries, with a flash of love and wit. 'We don't match to be a pair; we match to be one!'

The curtain falls. The applause is deafening. There are thirty

thousand readers of *London Society*, and every one is delighted. Amidst the hurricane of praise, cries of 'Author!' 'Author!' are palpable. The curtain is drawn aside, and he appears. He has not the face of a farce-writer, but no matter.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' he says stammeringly, 'thank you for your hearty reception. I presume from the warmth of your commendation that you have not perceived that this elegant trifle embodies a moral. Yet so it is. Theobald and Selina Podger had a quiet afternoon of life, contented, luxurious, and happy. They were commonplace people, seeking their own ends neither wickedly nor finely. Had they been a true hero and heroine they would have married young, been parents of a tribe of children, and perhaps have sunk into their graves under poverty, neglect, and disappointment. See them now, cosy and comfortable for the rest of their days. Mark the reward of prudence. Learn, ladies and gentlemen, not to be righteous over much; and always remember in this great theatre of human life there is farce in every tragedy and tragedy in every farce.'

A 'GOLDEN ISLAND.'

FROM the blue waters of the Mediterranean, opposite the extreme southern point of the coast of Provence, rise the picturesque rocks and wooded hills of the Iles d'Or, sometimes called the Iles d'Hyères, and known to the ancients as the Stœchades. Foremost among these Golden Islands is Porquerolles, a little place of comparative importance in local estimation. Does not the steamer from Toulon call there thrice a week? a fact which is considered in itself as the consolidation of a sound link with civilisation; is it not the station where the sick soldiers from Africa recruit their health after a due course of fevers and various maladies apparently indigenous to African soil? is it not, in short, with its six miles of length and two miles of breadth, the most extensive, as regards area, and the most thickly populated of the Golden Islands? In the estimation of the Golden Islanders, Porquerolles is a metropolis, and it would be vain to attempt to destroy the illusion.

The town lies on the sea-shore at the foot of a steep hill, on the summit of which is the old fort that still bears the marks of English bullets, and a little way below the fort are the military prison and hospital. The presence of the military, even if they be on the sick-list, always makes a certain stir in a district; and the embarkation of forty unimposing *piou-pious* for Toulon creates more commotion than the departure of a whole regiment of English soldiers from an English port, bound for India. The mu-

nicipal councillor of Porquerolles takes his stand upon the little pier, and M. le Commandant and other officers, the army doctor, the local architect, and the proprietors of the two houses of call, the Hôtel du Progrès and the establishment known as the Maison Roux, all congregate about the spot to give solemnity to the proceedings. The gallant defenders of French soil are primed with hints for the preservation of their equanimity during the desperate two hours' passage; there are many last words and agonising leave-takings, and then the little screw-steamer, that is hardly more commanding in appearance than the steamboats that ply along the Thames, rolls and tumbles out of the natural harbour, and many a sigh is breathed for the welfare of the adventurous few who have trusted to the tender mercies of the Mediterranean. And then the little crowd goes slowly back towards the Place Publique; the women return to their nooks under doorways and resume their knitting; the soldiers left behind crawl lazily up the hill in the direction of the fortress, and may be seen presently stretched at full length on the ground; the proprietor of the Hôtel du Progrès strolls back to the pretty shady terrace in front of the café attached to his hotel, and lights another pipe; and the sailors and fishermen lounging about the shore watch the steamer out of sight with jealous eyes, expatiating in their extraordinary language on the advantages of the sailing-boat over the steamer.

Close by the landing-stage is a

long stretch of sandy beach called *La Plage d'Argent*, or the silver beach, doubtless because of the dazzling whiteness of its fine sand. Here, in the summer, a few rough huts are erected, and a bathing-season on an infinitesimal scale is inaugurated. The names of these places are sufficient in themselves to tempt one. Conceive the delight of lounging about the silver beach of one of the Golden Islands!

The view to be had of the mainland opposite from this same *Plage d'Argent* is something too gorgeous for words to describe. Immediately facing the *Plage* on the opposite side of the broad belt of blue Mediterranean, lying like a huge white bird that is stretching out its wings in the sunlight, is Hyères, the 'town of palms;' to the left is the green *Montagne des Oiseaux*, from behind which rise the majestic peaks of the *Coudon*, the *Faron*, and the *Fenouillet*; and to the right lie *Les Salins* and *Bregançon*; to the left is *Toulon*; in the centre we can trace the mountain-chain of *Les Maurettes*; while far behind, stretching away to the extreme right, are the purple summits of the *Montagnes des Maures*. The scene is one that induces reflection, before which one pauses to wonder why there should be sin and sorrow and suffering on such a lovely earth!

Sin and sorrow and suffering are, however, well represented on the little island, for *Porquerolles* not only figures as a military hospital, but as a military prison. A certain number of the prisoners are confined to their cells, and are not allowed to ramble about the island; others, who are merely in a disciplinary corps, are permitted to wander over the grounds attached to the prison. As is well known, all French soldiers who

are unruly are sent to Algeria; in Algeria they often become ill, and then they are despatched to *Porquerolles*, where they are soon rehabilitated. Of two hundred soldiers who were sent to *Porquerolles* in the course of one year, suffering from various diseases, notably *cachexia*, intermittent fever, diseases of the lungs, and chronic bronchitis, one hundred and fifty men returned to their regiments in the space of five or six months completely cured. The military medical man—a Dr. Bernard—speaks very highly of *Porquerolles* as a summer resort,—the wind, whichever way it blows, must be cooled in passing over the sea to reach this little island, while at the same time its frequent bursts and gusts temper the heat of the fierce sunshine. The air of the island has, of course, a specially beneficial effect on persons suffering from general weakness, *anæmia*, digestive difficulty, or scrofulous symptoms; and as a summer retreat for a family wishing to have thorough change of air and change of scene also, without any calamitous outlay of money, the place would be ideal. How the children would scamper over the rocks and hills! how they would dabble about that silver sand, and dip in the blue sea! There would be no tiresome questions of conventionality as regards habits and customs; the children might be dressed in their oldest clothes, with a royal disregard of appearances, and might therefore tumble about at their pleasure on the silver beach.

The artist, the thinker, the philosopher, might revel in the beauty and comparative solitude of such a spot. 'Solitude sometimes is best society,' says Milton; and nowhere do thoughtful men and women find this out sooner than in the lovely places of the

Riviera, spoilt as they are by the gossip and scandalous chatter, the rapid occupations and frivolous amusements, of 'fashionable' society. You cannot isolate yourself and lead your own manner of life in these small towns half as well as you can in a metropolis, and few greater solitudes are available, unless you seek out a desert island, than the solitude that may be found in the crowded street of a crowded city. Comparative solitude may, however, undoubtedly be enjoyed on this little Golden Island of the Mediterranean. One may walk along the shore without finding a flirting couple round every rocky corner; one may sit down on the picturesque hills without coming in the neighbourhood of uproarious picnickers; one may stretch oneself at ease upon the silver sand, and throw stones meditatively into the blue sea, without any fear that the music of a German band will break in upon one's thoughts. It is a place where it would seem that almost every natural taste could be cultivated; pastimes connected with the water are easy enough, and lovers of boating, fishing, rowing, swimming, and bathing can have a 'real good time,' as the Americans say, at Porquerolles. The resources here are ample for the naturalist, the botanist, the geologist, the entomologist; the man who is a crack shot can, for the trifling cost of a permit, try his skill on the golden pheasants running wild about the thickly-wooded hills; the enthusiastic pedestrian can ramble up hill and down dale and along the coast with never-failing delight; and the careful housewife can rest here in peace, knowing that no extravagant sums are being laid out, and that life is going on at an infinitely cheaper rate than could ever be the case at an English

seaside place. There are only two places on the island at which one may put up as yet,—the Hôtel du Progrès and the Maison Roux; but rumour speaks of a palace that will eventually spring up on the slope of one of the seven hills, and that will outshine all the monumental hotel splendour of the Riviera towns. The palace will grow slowly, however, in all probability, and for the moment the field is monopolised by the two hotels already mentioned. The Hôtel du Progrès holds the higher rank of the two, and is a trifle the dearer. The proprietor professes to charge seven to eight francs a day per head, everything—bed, board, and wine—included; while Madame Roux's charge is five francs a day per head for similar advantages. In both cases it is certain that special terms could be made for a family coming for a specified time, for a month or six weeks; and many an English household accustomed to spend a six weeks' or two months' holiday at Eastbourne, or St. Leonards, or Dover, would find a trip to Porquerolles in search of 'fresh woods and pastures new' a success from economic as well as from æsthetic and educational and pleasurable points of view. Let no one forget, moreover, that this is the legendary land of the *bouillabaisse*, which should always be eaten, say epicures, on the shores of the Mediterranean. There is a *chef* on the Golden Island whose fame has travelled far beyond Porquerolles, as supreme in the manufacture of this one delicacy; he will catch the fish himself a few moments before he cooks it; he will put a *bouillabaisse* before you that should, enthusiasts declare, be an epoch in your life; and it may be as well to remember that Dr. Bernard lives at a stone's throw, just across the Place.

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

BY MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XIII.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

ALL in the dull damp weather which preceded the green Christmas of that dreary winter, Mr. Pousnett, as unmoved by atmospheric influences as he seemed indifferent to business crises, picked his way, one dark afternoon, over the muddy crossings, and paced along the dirty pavements, which brought him, as they had previously brought Robert McCullagh the younger, to Basinghall-street.

He did not, though threading the City lanes and alleys, as familiar to him almost as they were to Alfred Mostin, look like one who spent most part of every day within a few minutes' walk of the Exchange. There was that in his carriage, his appearance, his dress, which separated him in some indescribable yet subtle manner from the bulk of those who rushed and pushed and jostled each other upon the very pavements he trod. He had never posed for a City Father. He had always fought shy of the honours Cockaigne can and does confer upon favourite and deserving children. In his heart of hearts Mr. Pousnett, if such heresy may be whispered, despised the aldermanic gown and the Lord Mayor's robes. He had sat at civic feasts, but as a guest merely, holding himself as much aloof from his entertainers as courtesy and civility permitted.

There were those who—having, misled by the merchant's genial manners, ventured upon a certain

degree of easy familiarity much in favour round and about Capel-court and its environs, found themselves and their advances repulsed with the coolest and civilest contempt—declared that 'Pousnett was as proud as Lucifer,' generally adding a desire to know, addressed to no one in particular, 'what he had to be proud of.'

Following his erect figure, his firm yet easy walk, the manner in which he made all comers give place to him, simply by drawing away from instead of hustling them, any dispassionate observer must have confessed that, even physically, Mr. Pousnett had cause for standing well in his own esteem. Every yard or so he was greeted by some one who understood his greatness; and the mode in which he lifted his umbrella to his hat in acknowledgment of such marks of respect reminded one irresistibly of an officer answering the salutes of his privates. Mr. Pousnett regarded a good many worthy citizens, who stood pretty high in their own conceit, as mere rank-and-file in his serviceable army.

With the leisurely step, that yet made such good progress, which had brought him from Cornhill to Basinghall-street, he turned out of the latter thoroughfare into the unnamed court where Mr. McCullagh resided. Just for a second, as he debouched into the open space mentioned in an early chapter of this story, he paused and looked around with the natural curiosity of a man of leisure, who

for the first time finds himself in a strange locality in a familiar neighbourhood. In the City there are still nooks and crannies upon which even a man accustomed to the pavements within the walls all his life may light unexpectedly; and though Mr. Pousnett knew the ins and outs of London better than most people, it so happened he had never chanced before to visit the place where Mr. McCullagh resided, and which, indeed, was only distinguished in the *Directory* by a certain number in Basinghall-street.

As he glanced about the still, quiet court, where the roar of traffic sounded but as the wash of waves upon some sandy coast, his eyes chanced to perceive the face of a girl peeping from an upper window. Whenever she saw she was noticed, she instantly withdrew from observation. Mr. Pousnett smiled. 'I think,' he considered, 'my new partner told me he had no sister.' Then he went straight across to the house where any one could from afar behold Mr. McCullagh's good name set out in white letters on a black board. Crossing the threshold he stood for a moment uncertain; there was a door to his right, another to his left, and a grand old staircase in front. He was admiring the latter, when a boy came into the hall. He had his hand on the right-hand door, when, perceiving the stranger, he paused.

'What's yeer wull?' he asked; and then Mr. Pousnett knew he was in the presence of some one attached to the establishment.

'Can I see Mr. McCullagh?' he asked pleasantly.

'Ay, can you,' the lad replied, looking with national suspicion upon the agreeable Southerner. 'He'll be in the counting-house. Will I say who it is that wants him?'

'There is no necessity,' answered Mr. Pousnett, and, adroitly frustrating the youth's intention of rushing before him, he walked straight into the office.

At the farther end—at the extreme end, indeed, of the warehouse—beyond the desks and the partitions, stood Mr. McCullagh, 'up till his neck,' as he himself would have said, 'in work.'

Book in hand and pencil at work, he was engaged in 'figuring out' various facts which were at intervals shrieked up to him from below, whilst he in turn screamed down into the basement:

'What are ye thinking of, mixing the boxes that gait?'

'For the Lord's sake, mind what ye're about with that marmalade!'

'There! I was confident ye'd o'erlook the mutton-hams!'

'Man, man, ye've nae mair sense nor a three-year-old infant!'

'Didn't I tell ye as plain as I could speak to send up that cask of sweeties before ye took another job in hand?'

'I am afraid I come at an inopportune time,' observed Mr. Pousnett, who, though he could have stood listening to these proceedings with interest for a considerable period, thought it advisable to announce his presence. 'Shall I call another day? You remember me, don't you? My name is Pousnett.'

'Bless and save us!' ejaculated Mr. McCullagh, taking the hand offered, and shaking it in an access of surprise and confusion. 'If I had not clean forgot ye! I had never seen ye in a hat before, ye understand, and that does make a wonderful differ.'

'It does,' agreed Mr. Pousnett, who was too well bred to point his acquiescence with a look towards Mr. McCullagh's headgear, an old Scotch cap of the species now known in England as Tam

O'Shanter, stiff with grease, and powdered with oatmeal, which added at least ten years to Mr. McCullagh's apparent age, and deducted about a hundred per cent from the respectability and prosperity of his appearance.

'I will come in again some other time,' repeated Mr. Pousnett.

'Deed will ye no,' said Mr. McCullagh, with a heartiness which was not quite real. 'I've just upon finished checking off some goods that are bound to be got off to-day, and am quite at your disposal. Have ye anything to say to me in private?'

'Well, no,' answered Mr. Pousnett, looking round the warehouse and wondering as he spoke where the private sanctum might be to which Mr. McCullagh's speech seemed indirectly to point. 'I called to speak to you about two or three little matters, but they are not of a private nature—not at all.'

'Maybe ye wouldn't object just to stepping across to the other room,' suggested Mr. McCullagh, anxious, perhaps, to show his visitor he kept a quiet corner for himself and friends. 'This place is aye thrang, and folk are given to interrupt me when they see me about.'

'I hope you do not include me amongst the number,' said Mr. Pousnett, 'though I am afraid I did interrupt you unwarrantably just now.'

'It would be strange if I could not make a minute for you, Mr. Pousnett,' answered Mr. McCullagh, pronouncing the name loud enough to be heard distinctly at some of the desks, 'considering the honour ye have put upon me and my family.'

'The honour is mine, Mr. McCullagh,' replied Mr. Pousnett, with that proud bow which apes humility.

'It's very good of ye to say as much,' returned Mr. McCullagh, which interchange of diplomatic phrases brought them into the hall.

There for a moment Mr. McCullagh hesitated. The impulse was strong upon him to ask his visitor up-stairs, and show him more of the glories of the old house, concerning the perfections of which Mr. Pousnett commenced to wax eloquent.

But it had always been his practice to mistrust impulse, to believe it was merely a wild impish device of the Evil One to lead men to perdition. His 'sober senses' were, Mr. McCullagh felt, the best guides always to follow.

'When a man is a bit uplifted, he is apt to forget himself,' was one of his truisms; and no doubt in this idea, as in most of those he took to his bosom and cherished, Mr. McCullagh was right.

'Yes,' he said, in answer to Mr. Pousnett, when, after that temporary hesitation, he flung open the door of the room which Robert hated as he detested no other apartment in the house; 'it's an honest building, with, as you say, a fine staircase, better than yours in Portman-square. No offence, I hope.'

'Offence!' repeated Mr. Pousnett. 'I only wish to Heaven any house I lived in could boast anything like it. How did our ancestors manage? Why is it that we, their descendants, who spend ten times over the money they did, cannot get for any money such a habitation as they seem to have regarded as a matter of course.'

'Just because ye do spend ten times as much,' answered Mr. McCullagh, ignoring the implied connection between Mr. Pousnett's ancestors and his own. 'If ye didn't lay out so much in

many ways, ye'd have more at your disposal for one.'

Mr. Pousnett laughed.

'I do not lay out more in many ways, Mr. McCullagh, I daresay, than your friend who built that fine staircase; nevertheless, I cannot for the present get a house exactly to my mind. Perhaps, however, there may be a good time coming.'

'Won't ye sit down?' asked Mr. McCullagh, to whom at that moment no other observation occurred.

'Thank you, Mr. McCullagh, I will,' answered Mr. Pousnett. 'I have come round this afternoon,' he went on, plunging in *medias res*, 'because I think we may be able to do some business together.'

'Ay?' said Mr. McCullagh interrogatively, and placing himself on guard at once.

'We want a lot of things in your line, and if you can meet me in price, of course I would rather buy of you than from any one else.'

'I am sure I am much beholden to ye,' answered Mr. McCullagh dryly.

'Can you oblige me with a price-list?' inquired Mr. Pousnett.

'Certainly, certainly;' and the required document was produced with due expedition from a drawer in the table beside which the Scotch merchant sat.

For a couple of minutes there was silence, broken only by the noise made by Mr. Pousnett's pencil as he marked various items on the paper; then, pushing the list over to Mr. McCullagh, he said,

'When can you have those things ready for shipment?'

Mr. McCullagh looked at the articles and the weights pencilled on the margin, then, glancing up, he observed,

'It's a big order.'

'Do you think so?' returned Mr. Pousnett. 'I trust to send you a better one ere long. When can you deliver them?'

'The day after to-morrow. Will that be soon enough?'

'It must be if you cannot send them to-morrow.'

'I can't do that.'

'Well, let us say the day after. I will send you our marks and shipping-note in the morning.'

'Thank you,' said Mr. McCullagh, looking down at the paper once more. 'Ye know my terms, I suppose?' he added next instant.

'The usual terms, I conclude,' answered Mr. Pousnett easily.

'That depends on what ye call usual,' was the reply.

'You have me there,' laughed Mr. Pousnett; 'for, trading with all sorts of people, I find we deal on all sorts of terms. Let us, however, say the best for the seller—a month, two and a half off.'

'That's not the way I conduct my business,' answered Mr. McCullagh.

'What is your way, then?' asked Mr. Pousnett.

'Cash,' was the solemn answer.

'Cash—when?'

'Before delivery.'

'Do you get anybody to buy from you?'

'Whiles two or three.'

Mr. Pousnett lay back in his chair, and laughed heartily; and Mr. McCullagh sat looking at him and wondering what on earth he could find so amusing.

'You delight me, Mr. McCullagh,' he said, when he recovered his composure. 'Why, if we were to attempt to do business on the same terms we might put up our shutters within six months.'

'D'ye think so?'

'I am sure so. Credit is the very life of trade.'

'That may be, but I doubt it,' said Mr. McCullagh slowly. 'At any rate, cash is my rule, and I see no reason why I should depart from it.'

'Nor do I, since at present you have almost a monopoly of the Scotch trade in your hands. If, however—or, perhaps, I should rather say, when—some opponent comes into the market, you will perhaps see reason to alter your tactics.'

'It's no very likely that I shall,' retorted Mr. McCullagh, with a heightened colour, which told the shot had gone home. 'I have always maintained it's aye wiser to cry over your goods, nor after them.'

'If you can't get rid of your goods, it comes to pretty much the same thing, I should imagine,' said Mr. Pousnett equably. 'However, we need not trouble ourselves with abstract questions. You want the money for your goods, as you won't even trust me,' he added jocularly. 'Let me have invoice in the morning, and I will send a cheque with the shipping-note.'

If the great man expected Mr. McCullagh would say nay to this proposition, he was deceived. Some 'canny Scotch body' he was willing enough, as a rule, to trust, or a small tradesman trying to make an honest penny in a cautious way; but he had no faith in large firms, dealing in tens and hundreds of thousands.

'They're here to-day and there to-morrow,' he was wont to observe; 'and mostly before they do go, every farthing of capital has been spent; while as for assets, they generally, after the first statement, assume the form of bad debts.'

If Rothschilds had offered Mr. McCullagh a six months' bill, he would have told them civilly he

would not care to put himself under the obligation of asking his bankers to discount it. 'I have never needed a favour from them yet,' he would have explained, 'and I just feel I shouldna' like to begin now.'

For which reasons, and also perhaps, as he often said, he 'didna care to trust too many eggs in one basket,' Mr. McCullagh implied he would accept the proffered cheque, and have the goods ready at the time specified.

'So that is done with,' remarked Mr. Pousnett, with the relieved sigh of a man who wished it to be understood he detested nothing so much as the dry details of any commercial transaction. 'Business first, pleasure to follow. On New Year's-eve, Mr. McCullagh, my wife means to give a little party, and she has commissioned me to ask you if you will do her so much honour as to join her guests.'

'She's verra good,' said Mr. McCullagh, who really felt amazed, both at the promise of cash for such a quantity of goods, and the certainty of this most unlooked-for invitation.

'We shall dine at seven,' proceeded Mr. Pousnett, 'and I should esteem your coming up at that hour and taking share of whatever may be going as a favour. We are asking our friends to come early, as we only propose to have one dance after the clock strikes twelve.'

'I take it very kindly, both of you and Mrs. Pousnett,' said Mr. McCullagh, perplexed.

'The kindness is all on your side,' answered Mr. Pousnett gravely.

'I'm no sure that I'm just fit to go among a lot of young people,' observed Mr. McCullagh modestly. 'I've stayed so long in my hole, in a manner of speaking,

that it seems strange to me even to put my head out.'

'Nonsense,' retorted Mr. Pousnett. 'You seem to me to enjoy society far more than your son.'

'You scarcely saw him to advantage that evening,' Mr. McCullagh replied. 'He was just as uneasy as a hen on a hot grid-dle.'

'I don't know what a griddle may be,' said Mr. Pousnett; 'but now you speak of the matter I think it likely he was anxious. You were surprised, I suppose, to hear we had taken him into partnership after all.'

'I can't say that I was exactly. I always told Robert if you wanted him you would not stand out about the money.'

'You were quite right there,' returned Mr. Pousnett, with a smile.

'He did not think I was right at the time,' went on Mr. McCullagh, unsuspecting of the double meaning underlying his visitor's words.

'Young people often despise the wisdom of their elders,' a general proposition which committed the speaker to nothing.

'Ye're no far out,' agreed Mr. McCullagh, accepting the statement as having particular reference to his son. 'Robert thinks he could buy and sell me too.'

'He thinks wrong, then,' replied Mr. Pousnett shortly.

'Ye'll have bidden him, I suppose, to that set-out ye were speaking of?'

'No, I have not,' was the unexpected answer; 'and, what is more, I am not going to ask him. Do not look so astonished, Mr. McCullagh. You will soon understand the why and wherefore of my seeming inhospitality, for I am going to be quite frank with you. I have daughters, fairly good-looking, and, I think I may

say without vanity, possessed of pleasant manners.'

'Indeed ye may do that,' said Mr. McCullagh, as the speaker paused. 'Handsomere or more agreeable young ladies it would be hard to find.'

'Thank you. Well, your son is still a young man, and he appears younger than his actual age; he is not destitute of personal attractions, and—Need I explain my meaning further, Mr. McCullagh?'

'Weel, no. I understand pretty accurately. Ye're afraid one of your girls might take a notion of him.'

Mr. Pousnett nodded. He could not have spoken at that moment, great as was the amount of gravity at his command, without breaking into another peal of merriment.

'I won't say ye're wrong,' went on Mr. McCullagh. 'It's aye best to be on the safe side. There's no telling what young folks will do; and if it's a thing ye wouldn't like—'

'I should not like it,' interposed Mr. Pousnett, seeing his opportunity. 'I have quite other views for my daughters, and I intend to have no entanglements or complications I can avoid. That is why I do not mean to ask your son to my house. You see, Mr. McCullagh,' added the great merchant lightly, 'the confidence I place in *you*.'

'You consider me a horse of another colour.'

'Of quite another colour,' said Mr. Pousnett.

There are some persons with whom it is dangerous to indulge in even the politest joke, and Mr. McCullagh chanced to be one of them.

'Then if I understand you aright,' he remarked facetiously, 'when I propose myself to you

for a son-in-law ye'll make no objection.'

Had an earl ventured a similar observation in a similar manner, Mr. Pousnett's pride would have risen in arms; and it was with much ado he checked an angry retort. Perhaps, however, the sight of Mr. McCullagh as he sat peering across the table, and the absurdity of the position, did more to restore him to good temper than any merely prudential consideration.

The whole thing was irresistible. When he described the scene afterwards to his wife, she laughed till she cried.

'The dear old creature!' she exclaimed. 'He is just like a Brownie Herrion. And what answer did you make?'

'I said, "I thought that was a contingency it scarcely seemed necessary at present to contemplate."'

Which happened to be, indeed, word for word Mr. Pousnett's reply.

'But supposing I did take such a notion into my head,' persisted Mr. McCullagh, whose ideas of 'wut' were of the crudest description.

'In such a case,' answered Mr. Pousnett, 'I should refer you to my daughter.'

'That's no so bad,' said Mr. McCullagh, with his short dry chuckle; 'but ye may make your mind easy, Mr. Pousnett. I'm thinking the woman has yet to be born who could beguile me into the holy estate of matrimony a second time.'

'You found once enough,' conjectured Mr. Pousnett, answering rather the tone of Mr. McCullagh's words than the remark itself.

'I did; and yet, upon my conscience, I don't know to this day whether the fault was hers or mine.'

'I am certain it was not yours,' said Mr. Pousnett politely.

'Well, in one way perhaps not; for I could not change my nature, and that was about the only thing could have us run smoothly in harness.'

'Your son resembles his mother, I suppose?'

'He favours her,' said Mr. McCullagh shortly, and there was that in his voice which told Mr. Pousnett the conversation had better be changed.

In the best of all ways he effected the desired diversion by rising to go.

'You will receive a card from my wife,' Mr. Pousnett remarked ere he went; 'and I shall tell her she may hope.'

With which diplomatic speech the great man departed, leaving Mr. McCullagh more curious, more puzzled, and more totally at sea than he had ever felt before in the whole course of his life.

CHAPTER XIV.

EFFIE ASKS A QUESTION.

AFTER a considerable amount of what he, in his rich and expressive idiom, called 'swithering,' Mr. McCullagh finally made up his mind that he would grace Mrs. Pousnett's reception with his presence.

'Unless I see more of that man I shall never be able to make head nor tail of him,' he considered, and, making thus both a virtue and a necessity of his own inclinations, he wrote the 'good lady' a formal epistle, intimating that, if in the mean time all went well, he hoped to have the good fortune to meet her in good health on the evening of the thirty-first. By the same post he despatched a note to Mr. Pousnett, thanking him for the hearty manner in

which he had renewed his invitation to dinner, and signifying in a light and airy manner that about seven P.M. on the day named he might be expected to turn up in Portman-square. Then, but not till then, he one afternoon took Mrs. Pousnett's card out of its envelope, and saying carelessly, 'That's the way the big people Robert's got amongst ask their friends to take a cup of tea with them,' placed it in a conspicuous position on the mantelshelf.

He had not thought it well to apprise Miss Nicol of the advent of this second mark of favour till he should have decided whether he meant to go or to stay away. Ever since Fortune commenced to smile on his first-born, ever since in fact he had cautiously broken the news that Robert was indeed a partner in the great house, he had noticed what he mentally termed a 'girling' on the part of Miss Nicol and a drooping depression in the fair Effie.

The former lost no opportunity of 'girding' at the 'lad's shortcomings,' while Effie looked out of window for his long-deferred appearance with such pallid cheeks and red eyes that Mr. McCullagh was fain to cheer her with the honoured old proverb which assures disappointed maidens and jilted swains there are as 'good fish in the sea as ever came out of it.'

'Mind your seam,' he said, recalling the words he had heard addressed to his sisters when they were 'wee tow-headed lassies,' 'and hold yourself up; there's money bid for ye.' Hearing which facetious piece of consolation Effie was wont to wrench herself somewhat ungraciously out of Mr. McCullagh's grasp, and retreat to her own room, where she would have stayed altogether in those days when Robert came not near, if Miss Nicol would only have 'let her be.'

'He'll be far too grand to come near us now, I'm thinking,' was Miss Nicol's first remark when she heard from the proud father of the 'rise' his son had got in the world.

'He's gone to Holland,' answered Mr. McCullagh dryly; 'but I daresay when he returns he may give us a sight of himself now and again. After all, Janet, it is not Robert's fault his employer should have taken such a liking to him. I'm sure, to hear ye, anybody might think the boy had committed some sin.'

It was because of this little failing of jealousy on the part of his kinswoman (a failing circumstances had not hitherto brought into prominence), that Mr. McCullagh decided to avoid all comment and controversy on the subject of Mrs. Pousnett's invitation till the die was cast, and he could simply say, 'I am going.'

In silence Miss Nicol read the card; in silence she made room for Effie also to read it.

'They must be very grand folk,' said the latter, with the suspicion of tears in her voice. 'If ye had not told me,' she added, turning to her benefactor, 'I'm sure I never would have guessed what it all meant.'

'And I am sure I don't know what all of it means now,' capped Miss Nicol. 'It is the strangest thing I ever saw: no compliments, no asking the favour of your company. Well, it's some of the new fashions, I suppose. And what does *R.S.V.P.* stand for? It is something like that they put on the Roman Catholic tombstones, isn't it?'

'Come, Effie, now's the time to air your French,' cried Mr. McCullagh. 'Construe, construe, like a good girl.'

'I know nothing about it,' answered Effie pettishly.

'What does it mean?' asked Miss Nicol, discreetly anxious to avert a storm.

'Send a reply, if you please,' explained Mr. McCullagh, who had been at some trouble to obtain his information in an indirect way.

'It is a pity she couldn't have said that in English.'

'I make small doubt she could if she had been so minded.'

'And ye're going to send an answer?'

'O, I've done that! Mr. Pousnett came here himself, and was so terrible pressing I could not but say I would make one fool amongst many.'

'Ye'll be getting quite conceited now such great people are running after ye.'

'I may. When I feel the symptoms coming on, I'll tell ye, Janet.'

'And I suppose Robert is going too?'

'He is not going with me, at any rate,' answered Mr. McCullagh, too wise and loyal to 'let on,' as he would have phrased it, that his son was left out in the cold. 'He is still in Holland, as I am given to understand; and now he is one of them he'll see enough of the Pousnetta, I'll go bail.'

'He'll, maybe, be marrying one of the young ladies ye said played so well,' hazarded Miss Nicol, with a sly glance towards Effie.

'There is nothing impossible; but I don't think that is likely,' observed Mr. McCullagh, in a manner which did not encourage Miss Nicol to continue the conversation in the same strain.

'And so ye really are going out to a dance,' she said, after a moment's pause, with a sort of elephantine playfulness.

'Ay, and to dinner first,' answered Mr. McCullagh, glad to get this additional explanation over.

'They seem to have taken a wonderful fancy to ye,' remarked Miss Nicol dubiously.

'And why wouldn't they?' returned her relative, in a tone of defiance. 'Is there anything about me that should prevent man or woman taking a fancy to me?'

'No, no; ye misinterpret me altogether,' said Miss Nicol hurriedly; 'only it appears sudden, that's all.'

'It's not so sudden as the change in you, Janet,' retorted Mr. McCullagh. 'There was a time when apparently I could do nothing wrong in your esteem; now it would seem there is not a single thing I can do right, even to accepting an invite from those who have stood friends to my son, and are willing to be friendly to me.'

'Some day ye may know who are your true friends,' answered the housekeeper sententiously.

'Some day, Janet, all things will be revealed; but till then we must just do the best we can with the light at our disposal,' answered Mr. McCullagh. 'And now, to put matters upon a reasonable footing, I may tell ye, once for all, I am not going to be told by anybody living under my roof and eating my bread who I am to know, or who I am not to know; where I am to go, or where I am not to go; who I am to call my friends, and who I am to consider my enemies. You have been taking a wee too much on yourself of late, Mistress Nicol, and it is best we understood one another soon. We must, in any event, do that syne.'

Mistress Nicol, as he called her, —Miss Nicol, who once had hoped to change that patronymic for the lengthier, if less euphonious, name of McCullagh—who, indeed, still entertained a lingering expectation that some day, any day, her kins-

man might say, 'Janet, wull ye be my wife?'—for reply only took out her handkerchief and applied it to her eyes, to conceal perhaps the most genuine tears of rage ever shed by a 'douce' Scotchwoman.

Her emotion might have moved many a one of the male sex; but Mr. McCullagh had served an apprenticeship to female humours and tactics, and would not have been much affected even by a fit of hysterics.

'I do not see what call ye have to greet, Janet,' he said, in his hardest and most unsympathetic Doric. 'If it was Effie, now, I could understand it better, though, as I told her no later nor yester e'en, it's no Robert's fault he couldna take a fancy to her; and I am sure I'm sorry enough he couldn't. All the fretting in the world won't snare a man's heart, though.'

'I'm very sure I want none of his heart,' exclaimed Effie, in an access of indignation. 'I take it hard of ye, uncle, to make so little of me as to conceit such a thing.'

'It's no making little of ye to conceit ye might have taken a liking to my son,' retorted Mr. McCullagh.

'Ay, but it is,' retorted Effie, 'if he never thought of me.'

'I'm thinking ye've the best of it, my lass,' returned Mr. McCullagh, who was just, if not chivalric. 'Ye're quite right; and I'm fain to ask your pardon for what I said just now. I'm real sorry you and Robert couldn't make a match of it. I'd have liked it well enough, though ye haven't a halfpenny-piece, or the chance of one.'

'There's no need to mind me I have no money,' expostulated Effie, who indeed looked as unlike a young woman possessed of a 'great fortune' as a young woman well could.

'If he'd had a mind for ye, I'd have made that right, though,' explained Mr. McCullagh blandly. 'But there's no use talking about that now.'

'If I'd been consulted,' interposed Miss Nicol, whose tears were now dry, 'there would have been no use at any time. I would rather see my brother's child in her coffin than wife to a man who hasn't a thought beyond his genteel figure and his well-fitting clothes.'

'Would ye now!' said Mr. McCullagh, after the manner of an interjection.

'I wish ye wouldn't quarrel concerning Robert over me,' suggested Effie, who at that moment was the coolest of the party. 'I do assure ye both I am not troubling my head about him.'

'And I am very certain I am not,' exclaimed Miss Nicol, with a gasping sob.

'And ye may both take your oath, I am not now,' finished Mr. McCullagh. 'The lad has struck out a course for himself, and a fine course it is. I never thought any son of mine, and more especially the son least resembling myself, would do so well as Robert has done. I'm thinking none of us knew what was in that boy. I take shame to myself whiles for thinking his brothers would beat him in the race.'

'The race isn't over yet, mind that,' said Miss Nicol, with a certain Satanic exultation.

'God forgive me, Janet, if I wrong ye; but I think ye'd be glad if Robert came a cropper,' observed Mr. McCullagh, wisely avoiding the discussion Miss Nicol's speech invited.

'O, I've no ill-will to Robert, I'm sure,' she answered. 'He's well enough behaved, and fair spoken into the bargain. The worst fault I've to find with him

is, he has more outside his head than he'll ever have in.'

'He's got a fine shock of curly black hair, if that's what ye mean,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'and maybe, if we'd had curly black hair, we might have been a thought proud of it too.'

'Ye're right there, uncle,' interposed Effie, who was utterly destitute of the natural advantages she had so admired in Robert. 'We would all have curly black hair, I suppose, if we could.'

'And if we had,' said Mr. McCullagh, eagerly thankful for the diversion, 'brown, or even red—or maybe, indeed, white—would come into fashion.'

Ah, Mr. McCullagh, like many another unconscious prophet, has lived to see his wise words verified. Within eleven years of the above utterance, he was listening with interest to talk about those 'foolish weemen' who paid a 'mint of money' to change the colour of their locks from ebon to blonde, and who dyed blonde red. In his heart, and perhaps for sufficient personal reasons, he hated black, and still more curly, hair. He had been wont to say, 'You may take my word for it, sir, a man with a curly head is either a rogue or a fool;' but he did not for the future mean to air this opinion, though Robert's hair, being merely wavy and inclined to turn only at the ends, could scarcely have been considered to come within that condemnatory category.

Robert as partner in Pousnetts' and Robert as manager were two quite distinct personages. Mr. McCullagh now recalled the facts that, 'first or last,' his eldest born had never, so to speak, cost him a penny; that he had, in appearance and manners, been a credit to the house of McCullagh; and that perhaps, upon the whole, he had been hardly done by. Miss

Nicol's antagonistic remarks did more to establish Robert in his father's good books than any amount of praise could have effected.

'I'm of the opinion,' said Miss Nicol, who had no gift of prevision, 'that we'll all of us have to be content with the hair the Almighty sends us.'

'I think He almost forgot you and me, Janet,' remarked Mr. McCullagh, with an awful pleasantry. 'We've neither of us much more covering to our heads nor Effie, and she doesn't own enough to keep out a small shower of summer rain.'

Having delivered himself of which genial remark, Mr. McCullagh left the room, and sought his sanctuary on the ground-floor.

While he was still a struggling man, doing, in his early days, a small business, that apartment had been the common sitting-room for himself and family. After his wife's death, however, he changed the arrangement of the house, dividing the chamber in twain, and taking one half for a private office, and devoting the other to sleep. Here he had for years been wont to retire when he got tired of his women-folk or wished to work out any problem in arithmetic which required the whole devotion of his mind. Latterly he had shut himself in this quiet haven more frequently than of yore, for he found many questions to think out in solitude; and it was, besides, an undeniable fact that, since she heard of the greatness thrust on Robert, Miss Nicol 'was not near so pleasant as she might be.'

She never missed an opportunity of giving the young man's vanity what Mr. McCullagh styled a 'side-wipe,' and worse than all, she did not hesitate 'whiles' to

indulge in a 'nasty sneer' regarding her patron himself.

They had never in that house been over wont to regard the courtesies of language; indeed, any person unaccustomed to so frank and plain a style of conversation might have considered it somewhat rude, even when no difference of opinion relieved the domestic monotony.

Mr. McCullagh was not a person who took much notice of 'manners' on the part of those he came in contact with; but he was quite sharp enough to understand when 'matters' lay at the back of a short word or a nasty sentence. He reviewed Miss Nicol, and came to the conclusion 'he wasna just satisfied' with that lady. She was 'taking on her' in a way he did not exactly understand. He recalled the fact that years previously Miss Nicol had once before 'tried it on' with him, and signally got the worst of the encounter. On the occasion in question she wanted to wring out of him a promise of an annual 'steepend,' she who was boarded and lodged at his expense, and had 'no call to soil her fingers.'

Miss Nicol took quite another view of the matter, and, although she had a small income sufficient to provide her with dress, thought she was well worth five-and-twenty pounds a year.

'Ye're out of your mind, Janet,' Mr. McCullagh informed her; 'seeing the riches and extravagance of London has turned your head a wee, I'm thinking.'

'My cousin John says he'll be glad to give me thirty pounds a year if I'll go to Liverpool and keep house for him.'

'Then ye can't do better nor accept his offer,' observed Mr. McCullagh, in his most decided manner.

'I'm sure I don't want to leave ye,' answered Miss Nicol, 'if ye can only pay me something.'

'I can pay ye nothing,' retorted Mr. McCullagh, 'nothing at all. It's not as if ye were a servant; ye know, ye've your time to yourself. The children are at school most part of the day, and ye can sit down to your book, or your needle, or, if ye prefer it, go out and see your friends. I told ye before, and I tell ye again, that so long as ye don't stint the food ye may keep aught ye can save out of the housekeeping.'

'Out of the housekeeping!' repeated Miss Nicol, with a sudden uplifting of hands and eyes. 'Preserve us! A flea would starve upon all that is to be saved out of the money you allow.'

'If ye're dissatisfied, ye'd best see how you can hit things off with your cousin: only mind this, Janet, once ye leave here, ye'll leave for always. I can't have ye coming back again in case you find, when ye get down to Liverpool, ye've jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire; which last hint was so unmistakable Miss Nicol decided to remain in Basinghall-street.

'Better the ——— you know,' she thought, 'than the ——— you don't.'

She was aware her cousin John had a considerable spice of ill-temper in his nature; for which reason, and also because she firmly believed Mr. McCullagh would one day make her all his own, she decided to stay where she was, save any trifle she could out of candle-ends, and wait patiently for what, in the fulness of time, might be brought forth.

'I wonder what she has in her mind now?' considered Mr. McCullagh, reverting to the insubordination of his womenkind. 'I'm not surprised at Effie, because I've been forced to come down pretty

heavy over her knuckles to rout that notion of Robert out of her mind; but Janet seems clean demented. A fine thing, indeed, if I am to ask her leave and license before I go to eat my dinner at a friend's house! I know right well she'd like to see Robert a clerk, and a poor clerk, all his life.'

He went on with some work he had brought with him from the opposite office, and becoming gradually absorbed in the interesting details of business, soon forgot all about Miss Nicol's discontent and Effie's disappointment; indeed, he had so many calculations to make and important items to enter that time slipped away without his noticing the fact, and he was only at length aroused from his occupation by a gentle knocking on the panel of the door.

'Come in, come in,' he cried, 'whoever ye are! O, it's you, Effie, is it?' he added, as that meek and colourless young person advanced a step or two into the room.

'Will I bring ye down a cup of tea?' she said, in that low voice of hers which always seemed to be begging pardon for making itself heard at all.

'What, is it that late?' asked Mr. McCullagh. 'Why, bless me,' he went on, 'I had no notion of the hour! No, no; I'll come up. I'll follow ye immediately. Is the tea wet?'

'Ay, this twenty minutes,' answered Effie. 'That's why I thought I'd tell ye,' and she flitted, with her dull, lifeless, ungirlish step, back to the first floor, where she now lit a candle, and poured more water into the teapot, and buttered some scones she had been keeping hot on a little toaster hanging before the meagre fire.

'Ye've a good smell here,' said

Mr. McCullagh, entering the room a minute afterwards. 'What is it—griddle-cakes?'

'I thought I'd bake ye some scones,' answered Effie. 'Ye didn't take much dinner, I noticed.'

'I'd plenty for my dinner: but scones are aye welcome. Where's Janet?'

'If ye mind, she said she was going round this evening to see old Mrs. Anderson.'

'I b'lieve she did,' returned Mr. McCullagh, who felt his kinswoman's absence a relief. 'Those scones are capital, Effie; ye've a rare light hand for baking of all sorts.'

Effie received this compliment in silence, with a drooping head and a sad smile. It was an awful experience to try to keep up a conversation with her. Nevertheless Mr. McCullagh, who possessed the great virtue of never sulking, plunged cheerfully into the abyss.

'Have ye been for a walk to-day?'

'No, I haven't.'

'But ye'll have been for your music-lesson?'

'No.'

'How's that? Why didn't ye go?'

'It's not the day for it.'

'Ye're not eating anything. Have a piece of scone?'

'I'm doing very well,' answered Effie, munching a morsel of stale bread.

'Nonsense! Take some of this while it's hot,' and Mr. McCullagh hospitably handed the plate across the table. Effie modestly helped herself to the eighth portion of one of the delicacies proffered. 'And so this isn't the day you have your lesson?'

'No.'

'D'ye think ye're getting on well with the piano?'

'I can't tell.'

'But your mistress says you've made great head.'

'Ay, so she says.'

'Ye don't speak as if ye were exactly of her opinion.'

Mr. McCullagh intended this remark merely in the way of a polite observation, for his mind was wandering off on quite an opposite path from Effie and her music; but the little quiet maiden accepted it as a query.

'Well, I'm not,' she said, in that low slow drawl which was to English ears so inexpressibly aggravating, but which Mr. McCullagh considered the 'right sort of thing' in a 'lassie.' 'If she'd just a bit more life about her,' he sometimes added. 'I thought I was getting on fairly till I heard you talking about the way those ladies "made the piano speak."''

'D'ye mean Mr. Pousnett's daughters?'

'I couldn't mean anybody else,' answered Effie meekly.

'Well, their performing is something beyond the ordinary, that's a sure thing,' said Mr. McCullagh meditatively.

'Ye don't think I'd ever be able to play like them?'

'Ye might, ye know,' replied her relative. But his tone implied that if he had observed 'ye might not,' it would have been nearer the mark.

'I was talking to Mrs. Olfradine about it,' went on Effie, 'and she tells me she believes musicians are born, not made.'

'That's curious, too, and her a teacher.'

'She can teach,' continued Effie, taking heart to speak out her parable; 'but she can't play, not like those you were telling me of.'

'That's a pity,' answered Mr. McCullagh, helping himself to another scone.

'And I'm very sure,' finished Effie, putting a little drop of tea in her cup and filling it up with lukewarm water,—'I'm very sure I'll never be able to play like them either.'

'Ye'll play well enough,' returned Mr. McCullagh encouragingly. 'It's nice to hear the piano-forte made go through its paces once in a way; but I'd just as lief hear you droning out some old lilt in the twilight, that takes me back to the times when I was a lad, and used to follow old Garvin Drimly, the blind fiddler, down to the place where the steamers landed. My word, he used to make a mint of money! Lord, he could give "Roy's wife of Aldivalloch" in a way that might have raised the very dead! If ye've done your tea, Effie, and a very poor one it was, go and play us "Roy's wife."''

Beautifully compliant, Miss Effie Nicol moved to the instrument, which was entirely out of tune, of which several notes were dumb, and evoked from its internal economy as best she might the air Mr. McCullagh's soul loved exceedingly.

'Ay, ay,' he said; 'that's it. Weel done, Effie! I can see him now, as I've seen him a hundred times, with his cheek pressed against the fiddle, and his right hand working the bow like a steam-engine, and his sightless eyes rolling in his head, and all the dirty bairns of the town at his heels, playing away like a good one. Let's have it again, Effie;' and as, encouraged by his enthusiasm, her stiff awkward fingers managed to evolve some faint semblance of spirit out of the instrument, Mr. McCullagh, who had by this time finished his own tea, grew so excited, he seized a knife in his left hand and beat time with the handle on the table,

whilst, snapping his fingers at intervals jubilantly, he chanted out, in a sort of thin cracked tenor,

'Roy's wife of *Al-di-valloch*,
Roy's wife of *Al-di-valloch*,
Wot ye how she cheated me
As we cam' ower the braes of Balloch?'

'Ye'll do, ye'll do, Effie,' he exclaimed, when, after having sung all the verses, and ended with a shriek on the last syllable, which he pronounced 'lough,' in a manner which no English tongue could ever hope to pronounce, the melody played on the piano and the vocal melody died away into silence at the same time. 'Ye'll do. So long as ye can turn a tune like that, ye needn't trouble your head about Miss Pousnett's shakes and quavers.'

Mr. McCullagh had not the faintest idea what a quaver might be, but he used the word as a good general sort of musical term.

The fair Effie, not at all elated by the extraordinary performance in which she had just taken part, glided silently from the piano to the tea-table, where, in a dull and mournful manner, she piled the plates, knives, cups, saucers, and other impedimenta skilfully upon the tray. Having concluded which ceremony, she called the red-armed hard-featured servant Mr. McCullagh generally, in an easy colloquial sort of way, mentioned simply as 'the gairl.'

CHAPTER XV.

NEW YEAR'S-EVE 1854.

UPON the second occasion of his being 'drest in all his best'—not to walk abroad with any Sally, indeed, but to repair to Mr. Pousnett's—Mr. McCullagh did not exhibit himself before the eyes of his womenkind with the pardonable vanity which had characterised his first entrance into high life.

He understood high life now, and told himself he didn't feel one bit elated at the prospect of penetrating once again into the Pousnett-Portman region.

Nevertheless, such is man, and such is the power over him of a fashionable neighbourhood, that Mr. McCullagh at heart only felt too glad to be bidden to a ceremonial in which he thought there was neither use nor sense.

Quite jubilantly he shaved his remarkable face, and confided to himself at the same time:

'This is quite a new sort of thing for you to do, Robbie, my boy.'

'Well, yes,' his self returned for answer; 'but it is better late nor never.'

'My word,' he exclaimed, a little later on in the solitude of his chamber—and I will observe that he pronounced the monosyllable 'wird'—'it's changed times wi' the laddie that cam' into London to find his uncle dead and himself just cast a-loose in the streets of the big city like a stray sheep. There's not many would have bidden him to dinner then. I think I've shown some people there was something in what they'd the impudence to call the "sweetstuff-shop," after all.'

Much pleased with which reminiscences and considerations, Mr. McCullagh inducted himself by safe and sure process into various articles of his attire, that shall not, in the interests of propriety, be more particularly named; and when at length he was fully dressed, he looked at himself approvingly in the glass, glanced first over one shoulder and then over the other, and, with a sarcastic chuckle, observed,

'My faith, Robbie, ye're no sic a bad-looking fellow, after all. Maybe Mr. Pousnett had his reasons. We're told there's reason

in the roasting of eggs, though I never could see where there was rhyme, nor sense either, in the proverb, because I was always unable to understand how eggs could be roasted at all. That wee fellow in *Old Mortality* was a good hand, they say, at turning them in the ashes; but I've tried the game myself, and could make nothing of it.'

From all of which utterances it will be seen Mr. McCullagh was not merely in good spirits, but in the highest of spirits. Having once made a plunge into great society, it was a relief to him perhaps, on the whole, that his second essay of swimming in such strange waters should in no way be impeded by the presence and fancies of his first-born. Robert, he was aware, lacked on occasions all elements of geniality. He did not take things as they came. Most certainly his father felt he was 'too genteel' to 'consort comfortably with high-and-mighty folk.'

'Always and ever,' decided Mr. McCullagh, 'he's thinking about what they think of him. Now a man can't enjoy himself if he has for continuancy that sort o' demon grinning over his shoulder.'

If his 'weemen folk' had behaved themselves properly—that is to say, if Effie had not showed such a desponding lack of resignation, and Miss Nicol such a jealous spitefulness—Mr. McCullagh would have rewarded their good behaviour by again exhibiting himself in all his bravery before their eyes. It will be remembered he did this on the previous occasion, but now things were a 'bit altered.' He did not feel sure of sympathy or appreciation, 'quite the contrair;' so, having put his topcoat over his finery, he went up-stairs, and, merely remarking, 'There's no call for

anybody to sit up for me,' took his way swiftly down again into the hall.

The plaintive Effie mournfully hurried out with a candle to light him; but he called to her,

'Thank ye, but I don't need it. I've a candle here;' which, indeed, he had, and left moreover flaming in a draught near the keyhole.

No man would have been more severe upon such extravagance in another than himself; and knowing this well, Effie retired to notify the fact to Miss Nicol.

'Save us!' exclaimed that admirable lady; 'the world's coming to an end, I'm thinking. What next, I wonder! He's goin' clean out of his mind! I wouldn't be one bit surprised if any day he brought home one of those grand young women he seems to set such store by.'

'I'm thinkin' they wouldn't have him,' answered Effie, to whose inexperienced fancy Mr. McCullagh did not seem exactly an eligible suitor.

'Trust them!' retorted Miss Nicol, with bitter scorn. 'If ye put a coat on a clothes-prop, and put ten thousand pound in its pocket, there isn't one of that sort of girl but would jump at it.'

'Do ye think that?' asked Effie.

'Think!' with withering scorn. 'No; but I'm sure.'

After which wholesale condemnation of the upper stratum of society, Miss Nicol sat down to her needlework, and Effie to tatting, a species of fancy occupation much in vogue with 'maidens old and maidens young' about that time of the world's history. As she formed one part of the pattern after another—who knew!—perhaps Effie reconstructed also a portion of the demolished edifice of her life. If Mr. McCullagh 'took' to one of the Miss Pous-

netts, it was not so very likely Robert would take 'till another.' There was hope still; all was not lost. Effie, after she had been working for about half an hour, looked more hopeful than had been the case for some time previously.

Meantime Mr. McCullagh was wending his way due west, pleasing himself, as the omnibus rattled slowly along—for omnibuses literally crawled at that remote period—with conjuring up visions of what there would be to eat, and how Mrs. Pousnett would have 'help after help,' and what the young lassies would wear, and what the company would talk about, and what a lot Mr. Pousnett would make of 'plain auld Rab.'

Yes, certainly he felt very glad Robert was not to be of the company.

'He sat, that last night,' considered his father, 'with that dour a look on him, and his visage that hard set, he might have chilled a victorious army, let alone me. I'll be easy and unconcerned to-night, and able to tell better what Mr. Pousnett is made of.'

A problem which might have taxed an even wiser head than that screwed quite firmly on Mr. McCullagh's shoulders.

Once again the brilliantly-lighted house; the decorous butler; the spacious hall; the soft, sure, silent service; the drawing-room door flung wide; the 'glamour' of an apartment, lighted by wax-candles, exquisitely furnished, filled with the scent of rare flowers, adorned by the presence of lovely women.

For the Miss Pousnetts, though not beautiful or handsome, were very pleasing to look upon; they were grateful to the eye and satisfactory to the ear; they had sweet voices, agreeable faces, nice figures. To every sense they were grateful.

They always did the right thing well and gracefully. If it had been necessary for them to shake hands with a sweep, they would have done it, and never let the sweep see they knew their gloves were soiled. There is more in manner than most people imagine. For a moment Mr. McCullagh, as he crossed the threshold of that social heaven, felt there was *all* in manner.

Blandly genial as usual, Mr. Pousnett, the moment his name was announced, came forward to meet Mr. McCullagh, and bid him welcome; while Mrs. Pousnett, in a purple-velvet dress, trailed her skirts across the carpet, and, taking his hand in both of hers, said,

'I am *so* glad to see you again; it is *so* good of you to come!'

'I've been looking up my songs, Mr. McCullagh,' added the eldest daughter, holding his fingers in what the Scotchman afterwards called a 'good grip.'

'And we have been practising reels,' adventured Miss Vanderton. 'We think we are perfect, but no doubt you will show us we are all wrong.'

'If I'd been Whittington or Gresham, Lords Mayor of London,' explained Mr. McCullagh afterwards, 'they couldn't have set greater store by me. Bless me, ye'd have thought it was a prince at least they'd got hold of. Anybody might have thought it was I had given Robert twenty thousand pounds to be their partner, rather nor them taking him with nothing.'

'It must have been extraordinarily gratifying,' said Mr. Anderson, the friend to whom he confided this utterance.

Gratifying! Well, we all know there are times when words will not express what we feel, and one of those seasons was upon Mr.

McCullagh that night. The way Pousnetts 'got on' was 'just beyond everything. Laughing and joking and making merry like a lot of children.'

Dinner was served in the library, altogether a snugger place to dine than the large apartment where that meal was generally partaken of. A most select company sat down to table; and to them collectively, but most especially to Mr. McCullagh, Mr. Pousnett, unfolding his napkin, explained that, as the 'young people' intended to have a 'hop,' their elders were obliged to 'make shift' where they could.

'Because, Mr. McCullagh,' said Mrs. Pousnett blandly, beaming upon their honoured guest from the head of the table, whither she had been conducted, not by the new partner's father, but by a City man, upon whose very name Mr. McCullagh had hitherto looked with awe. 'I cannot bear to have my drawing-room, the place where one *lives*, turned out of window. I am certain you have some snugger you cannot endure to have disturbed: all gentlemen have, though they will not acknowledge it, and my drawing-room is my snugger to me.'

It was a nice quiet dinner of eight—only four of the Pousnett family and four strangers. 'Nothing,' explained Mr. McCullagh subsequently, 'could have been more elegant; the talk was good and sensible; the food all that a man could think of almost; the wine old and sound. We had a heap of conversation, after the ladies left the table, upon politics and commercial matters; and I may say in a general way the views expressed were correct. *They just accorded with my own.* They were all dead against the notion of Limited Liability—an idea, as I have often said, which

is just a child's folly. Mr. Pousnett said such a bill, even if brought in, would never be passed; and then some man, a member of Parliament, if I understood rightly, said, "I'll bet you ten to one that, before you are eighteen months older, it will be the law of England." "Then England will begin to go down-hill," answered Mr. Pousnett. He's a wonderfully clever man, and has the best of breeding. He asked my opinion, and I'm very sure they all listened to me laying down the law with the height of respect and attention.'

Which fact must have been extremely grateful to Mr. McCullagh, who loved laying down the law, and delighted in securing an understanding audience.

But at length they had to leave wine and politics and business, and ascend to the drawing-room, where Mrs. Pousnett was performing the conversational feat of talking to about twenty persons at the same time. To her Mr. McCullagh listened with exactly the same interest as that with which he would have watched a conjurer keeping up eight or ten balls. Just for a moment he thought, 'Now here's a rare bit to tell Janet and Effie, it will make them laugh;' but suddenly recollecting the effect produced by his previous confidences, he decided to maintain silence at home concerning the events of this, to him, wonderful evening.

The drawing-room was like 'a bower,' just hung with Christmas, and he had never seen so many flowers together, except at a 'show.'

After a time, the young people began to troop down-stairs, and the music made even old folks' pulses throb a little quicker, to the tune of some remembered melody.

'It's heartsome, it's heartsome,'

exclaimed Mr. McCullagh, as he stood beside Mr. Pousnett in the doorway, looking at the dancers.

'You will take a turn yourself, Mr. McCullagh, will you not?' Mr. Pousnett politely suggested.

'Thank ye, not just now; maybe after a bit I might try a step. I don't know much about your polkas and waltzes and quadrilles; but when I was a boy I could foot a reel with anybody, let that other be who he liked.'

'We will have a reel, then, presently,' said Mr. Pousnett.

'O, don't hurry yourself on my account,' answered the genial Scotchman. 'I'm doing very well. It is a real pleasure to me just to look on. It's as good as a flower-garden. I do not mind me ever to have seen so many well-favoured lassies together at one time. And aren't they graceful? Look at that young lady with the pearls in her hair: how she glides over the floor! A swan couldn't do it better.'

'I am sure you flatter us all,' answered Mr. Pousnett, and he really did look pleased at the compliment. 'Some day I hope to call that young lady my daughter-in-law. She is engaged to my eldest son.'

'Ye don't say that!' cried Mr. McCullagh. 'Is he here to-night? If so, ye might show me which he is.'

For the sons of the house had not put in an appearance at dinner, for the very sufficient reason that their father did not want them to be present.

'He is dancing with the young lady you admire.'

'What, that tall handsome fellow! He is a strapper; they are a splendid couple. It is beautiful to see how she seems to float, and the way he guides her through the other couples.'

'I shall tell her what you say,'

laughed Mr. Pousnett, 'and then you will see how she blushes.' A programme which was very shortly carried out successfully.

'How do you like our Christmas decorations, Mr. McCullagh?' asked Miss Pousnett, a little while after, coming up to where the Scotchman stood, and touching his arm with her fan in a delightfully friendly manner. 'We did it all ourselves. We made the wreaths and garlands, and my brothers nailed them up. We had such fun! There are few things I like so much as working among green leaves.'

'It is just too beautiful,' answered Mr. McCullagh, looking so straight in her face as he spoke it might have been imagined he was referring to it. 'I feel every now and then that if I shut my eyes for a minute I should find, when I opened them again, all vanished like a fairy scene. It does not appear real, you understand.'

'I am so glad you like it,' said Miss Pousnett, smiling sweetly. 'I assure you we hoped you would think it looked well.'

'And I am sure it was real kind of such pretty young ladies to think of such a dried-up old stick of business as myself. I feel I am out of my natural condition among you all. And where, if I may make so free, did you hang the mistletoe?' he added, with so sly a look the blood rushed up into Miss Pousnett's face, dyeing brow and cheeks and throat with crimson.

But it was only for an instant. The next she was herself again, and rose equal to the occasion.

'I declare it is too bad of you, Mr. McCullagh,' she exclaimed, 'to ask such dreadful questions. I must go and tell my cousin.'

'And ask her to scold me?' suggested Mr. McCullagh.

'No, it is too shocking for scolding.' And Miss Pousnett glided away, feeling vaguely that, whatever her father's little game might be, it was not worth such a candle as this.

'I do believe the odious old creature had a notion of kissing me—*me!*' she was saying to her sister a minute afterwards. 'I wonder papa insists on our being civil to such a scarecrow.'

'Never mind, so long as it is not the son,' answered the younger Miss Pousnett gaily; and, taking her partner's arm, she went off laughing.

Meantime Mr. McCullagh, standing alone, was considering.

'I'm thinking I put my foot in it that time. Save us, how she flared up all in a moment! She need not have been a bit afraid, though; I do not want to catch her under the mistletoe, pretty though she is.'

He felt more vexed and annoyed at the mistake he had made than so simple a matter might seem to require. In his way he was proud, and it mortified him to think he had made a slip.

'She'll be afraid to give me any more of her pleasant words,' he considered. But in this idea he chanced to be mistaken.

Ere long Miss Pousnett, together with Captain Crawford, came up to where he was standing, and said, 'as if she had never been put out,'

'Now, Mr. McCullagh, we are going to have a reel before supper.'

'I will look on ye dancing it with the greatest of pleasure,' he answered, in a tone and with a bow he fondly hoped would wipe out all memory of his past offence.

'No, you must dance it with us. We shan't let you off, so it is no use making excuses. I am going to introduce you to Cap-

tain Crawford's youngest sister. She is quite delighted at the idea of having a countryman for partner.'

'Then I'll be delighted to have a countrywoman for partner,' answered Mr. McCullagh gallantly, 'though I should have liked well to have cut a figure with yourself. Still, as that honour is not for me, I'll be only too thankful for the honour you purpose me.'

'If you make such pretty speeches to Miss Crawford,' said Miss Pousnett, 'you will turn her head.'

'I have been an awful long time out of practice,' observed Mr. McCullagh, as they crossed the room together.

'What a flatterer ladies must have found you when you were fully exercising your powers!' laughed Miss Pousnett.

'Well, I believe I was something of a hand at it,' replied the Scotchman, with humble modesty.

'Now we are waiting for you only, Mr. McCullagh,' exclaimed Miss Vanderton at this juncture; and looking round hurriedly, the gay Lothario saw indeed that three reels had already been made up.

'I thought my dancing days as good as over,' he said to Miss Crawford, a young and very pretty little girl; 'but it's like new life to have such a partner. If I make a mistake you'll forgive me, won't you?'

'I do not think we shall either of us make a mistake,' answered Miss Crawford demurely. 'It would be strange if you or I broke down in our national dance.'

'That's a good expression, "national dance." I shan't forget that in a hurry.' And then the music struck up, and off they started.

It says a good deal for the breeding of Mrs. Pousnett's guests that they looked on the per-

formance which followed as if it were some spectacle got up for their entertainment. Man born of woman could not have helped laughing, but their laughter was not ill-natured. Faster and faster grew the music, wilder and wilder Mr. McCullagh's excitement. He 'loured;' he cracked his fingers; his active little legs and feet seemed everywhere at once; he traced the figure eight with a conviction no one had ever so gone through it before; he looked gratified at the applause which rewarded his efforts; he banged his feet on the floor to mark the time; he uttered strange and unintelligible noises, and when at length the dance ended he panted out, 'Heh!' in an accent and with an energy which procured him another round of applause.

Had Robert been there he must have prayed that the roof might fall and cover him; but as he was not there the success won by his father was complete and unalloyed.

'We'll have that again some day,' said Mr. McCullagh to his partner, as he led her off triumphantly towards the supper-room. 'You were elegant: I think I may say I never saw a finer bit of dancing in my life.'

'Mr. Pousnett is going to open the door presently to let the new year in,' observed Miss Crawford. 'They always do that here.'

'And a right good plan it is too,' said Mr. McCullagh; 'after that it would be a rare thing if they had the march round.'

'If you mention the matter to Mrs. Pousnett, I have no doubt we could have it. What is it like?'

'You a Scotchwoman and don't know the march round! It's done to singing, and then everybody at the last joins hands.'

'That would be charming! Pray ask Mrs. Pousnett! Hush! Mr.

Pousnett is going to say something.'

'I must now request you to come into the hall,' spoke the host. 'It's just upon the stroke of twelve, and I am going to fling wide the door.'

They all trooped out, those who could not find standing room in the hall crowding up the staircase.

The door stood open.

'It's a most impressive sight,' said Mr. McCullagh; but Miss Crawford lifted a finger to impress silence upon him.

'Welcome, eighteen hundred and fifty-five!' cried Mr. Pousnett, in a loud voice, as the last stroke of twelve died away; and a sort of shout of greeting met the new-born year as every one present echoed the words:

'Welcome, eighteen hundred and fifty-five!'

'Well, I do call that something like,' observed Mr. McCullagh to a gentleman who was standing by.

'Yes; it wasn't bad,' answered the youth tolerantly.

'Now we must have the march round,' suggested Miss Crawford, and they had; they filed two and two round the whole of the dining-room, singing 'Auld Lang Syne;' and when they had completed the circuit, they stood solemnly side by side, hand clasped in hand—and some were clasped very tight—chanting out,

'We'll drink a cup of kindness yet
For Auld Lang Syne.'

At the end Mr. McCullagh—who had done his part in an extremely shrill, cracked tenor—was melted to tears. He shook hands with his host and hostess, and declared he would never forget that night.

There were others who, as they drove away, remarked they would never forget it either.

MAY-TERM REMINISCENCES.

BY AN OLD CANTAB.

I.

It is not given to all men to be Senior Wranglers or Senior Classics; nay, it is not given to all men even to be hard readers. Certainly neither I nor my friend Ned Jackson—to whom, reader, I propose to introduce you in the following pages—possessed the gifts necessary for any of the species I have mentioned; yet, notwithstanding this lamentable deficiency, we both of us contrived to spend a very jolly three years under the tender care of Alma Mater. I am not competent to describe the intense pleasures attendant upon reading sixteen hours a day, or grinding hard for a Greek Ode or a Camden Medal. I cannot say what period of their University career has most charms for men who indulge in these luxuries; but, for ordinary mortals, who are imbued with that erroneous idea that life has its pleasures and recreations, as well as its duties and its toils, there is no period which embraces such a wide extent of delights as that period known familiarly amongst Cantabs as the May-term. To be sure, sour, crabbed, musty old dons do their best to render it irksome by dint of chapels and lectures and examinations as a grand finale of the term. But who does not banish these hideous phantoms from his mind when he is heart and soul in the cricket-field; or when the cushioned punt glides slowly along with him under the drooping willows, while the lapping ripple and the sooth-

ing pipe lull him into oblivious ease; or when the fast trotter bowls him gaily along in the dog-cart at the dewy cool of evening; or when the united influences of gin-aling and sherry-cobbler produce convivial jollity amongst the social circle? Looking at the two sides of the picture, at the laborious and the jovial, who is there who will not say with Milton,

‘These delights if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live’?

O glorious May-term, how pleasant a retrospect it is to glance back at thee now, as we sit in dusty offices or pace our quiet rural parishes! When the bright sun streams in upon lawyer’s desk or parson’s study, do not our thoughts run back to old Alma Mater, and does not the busy pen flag for a moment, and the ponderous volume drop, as there rushes on our memory the recollection of the beauty of the ‘Backs’ on such a day? Do we not catch ourselves musing, and thinking how splendid the tall elms, that are the glory of the colleges, must look to-day; how pleasant to lie, lazily puffing the smoke from the amber lips of the old meerschaum, looking at the picturesque turrets of John’s and Trinity and King’s, and the snug walls of Clare, peeping out amongst the varied green of willow, elm, and chestnut? But avaunt, ye treacherous thoughts! ye steal us from our duties; your siren voices lure us from the stern realities before us. Such thoughts we must leave till eventide, when our work is ended, and pipe and

reverie may close the labours of the day.

Pardon this rhapsody, kind reader. If you are a 'Varsity man' you can, perhaps, sympathise with such retrospective thoughts; if you are not, you can at least recall some scene or scenes of your youth on which your memory often loves to dwell. Therefore forgive me, reader, if the rush of old associations has proved too much for me, has burst the sluices of my judgment, and fairly flooded the paper before me. I will now to my task. Reminiscences and adventures of a May-term. Good Heavens, what a number of them there are! But then, you see, there are some which, though harmless and trivial enough in the eyes of youth, might, nevertheless, seem far otherwise to the stern gaze of prim decorum and severe morality. Many a laugh does one have with old chums over such adventures when we meet in after-days; but they had better, perhaps, not reach the ears of governors, pastors, and masters, or else what we term fun might by them be misalled dissipation and debauchery. Not such, reader, are the reminiscences and adventures which I am about to confide to thee. They may not, perhaps, coincide with that strict propriety which it is necessary to assume at five-and-forty; but it must be remembered that they were the acts of young fellows, over whose heads had passed scarce more than twenty summers.

And first let me tell you how it was that I was induced to jot down these reminiscences.

A few days ago, I was spending a part of my vacation with my old friend Ned Jackson, who is now the rector of a parish in North Wales, having, by singular good fortune, obtained a comfort-

able living long before the time of life at which parsons are generally justified in looking for that climax of their aspirations. He had several of his and my old college friends staying with him at different times, during the period of my visit, and these were for ever beseeching me to give to the world a history of the 'Farks' which, as they affirmed, had given 'a distinct form' to our May-terms. Now, as I told them, it is very easy to talk over those things, and laugh heartily at them, and be excessively amused at them, when the circle of one's listeners is composed solely of those who have a personal interest in the narration, as having themselves played a prominent part in some, if not all, of the scenes narrated; but when you come to the world outside, it is scarcely probable that it will evince a similar interest in such a narrative. But there is one series of reminiscences and adventures which I thought might possibly interest, or at least amuse, the great outside audience, that is, the events connected with the marriage, or rather the courtship, of my old friend Ned Jackson, which certainly had a dash of the romantic about it. Whenever I have been a guest in Ned's house, he and I and his pretty young wife have been invariably accustomed to spend hours in recounting the curious circumstances connected with their courtship. And as I have their full permission to make these circumstances public, if you will bear with me, reader, I will now relate them to you. Let me therefore begin in the orthodox style.

It was a beautiful evening in May. Ned and I had been playing cricket almost all day on Parker's Piece; we had finished our game, and having refreshed

ourselves with a good wash, we proceeded to stroll slowly along the streets. Finding ourselves at length rapidly approaching the limits of the town, it was proposed that we should pay a visit to the station, which, in addition to its beer, could boast of some of the very prettiest waitresses in the town: Thither then we directed our steps, and soon found ourselves in the refreshment-rooms, chatting across the counter to two of the prettiest of the girls, most ladylike young women, and quaffing bitter ale from those tankards which are considered indispensable to the University, and without which 'Varsity men' are popularly supposed to be unable to appreciate the taste of malt liquors. Moreover, contrary to all by-laws of the company, we proceeded to fill and smoke that silent but invaluable companion, the domestic pipe. We were thus agreeably engaged, when, hark! a whistle in the distance, the rush of approaching wheels, the inarticulate yells of porters, a hissing, a fuming, a deafening noise right in front of the refreshment-rooms,—the down train! Arm-in-arm we left the fascinating damsels at the counter, and proceeded to inspect the travellers. We found very little beauty to attract us, and we were on the point of turning in to enjoy the society of the fair waitresses again, when Ned suddenly clutched me by the arm, at the same time exclaiming,

'By Jove, there's a pretty girl!'

I turned and looked in the direction to which he pointed, and there, sure enough, was a very handsome girl, accompanied by an old man, to all appearance her father, who seemed also, by his dress, carriage, and fierce moustache, to be a military veteran. The old boy was very sharp and testy with the porters about some

of his luggage, which he was unable to lay his hands upon; and whilst he was engaged in slanging them we passed the young lady, and favoured her with a searching glance, to which she responded with a merry twinkle of the eyes and a slight scarcely-perceptible smile. These tokens of course we interpreted favourably to ourselves, and flattered ourselves that our prepossessing exteriors had produced an effect on the fair demoiselle. In a short time the luggage was cleared away, the train had rolled off on its journey, such of the passengers as the 'bus had not carried off into the town had subsided into refreshment-rooms and waiting-rooms, and the platform was left comparatively desolate. In the bustle consequent on the train's departure we had lost sight of the object of our attentions, but great was our delight at now observing her seated by herself at the farther end of the platform. Towards her, then, of course we casually strolled. The stern parent had for a moment left his charge, and was pursuing his restless fidgety inquiries among the porters at the luggage-office. We had now leisure to observe our fair enchantress. She was a tall fine-looking girl, with rich clusters of dark-brown hair and a pair of mischievous hazel eyes, which glanced slyly up at us from the book which she was ostensibly perusing. By and by her father, or guardian, or whatever he might be, rejoined her, and the two paced the platform together, whilst we kept continually passing and repassing them, never failing to elicit each time a quick sly look from the bright brown eyes.

Once more the fidgety old gentleman left the young lady, and she quietly seated herself as before and opened her book. This time, as we passed her, Ned dropped a

rosebud at her feet, or at least as near to them as he could contrive to do in his hurry; and when we turned back at the end of our promenade, great was his excitement and eagerness to discover whether she had deigned to accept this humble offering of admiration, whether she had picked it up from the ground or suffered it to lie there unheeded. We passed her; but no look of recognition met us this time, and the rosebud lay untouched where Ned had dropped it. This was decidedly discouraging, and Ned's face wore a look of most comical distress. I laughed, and said,

'I'll tell you what it is, Ned, my boy; you've just gone a little too far; she'll never pick up that flower, you know.'

'I'll bet you she does,' retorted Ned.

'Done!' said I. 'I'll bet you half-a-sov. she doesn't.'

'So you shall,' replied Ned, and again we passed the unconscious subject of our wager. No smile, no look—the flower still lying on the ground. Once more we tried to attract her attention, but with the same want of success. So, disheartened and disgusted, Ned walked out of the station.

I was in high glee at the thoughts of pocketing my half-sovereign; so I said,

'Come, Ned, let's try what sort of a tap they keep in the tavern over the way, and then we can go back and see whether anything has happened in our absence.'

We entered the tavern, and presently emerged from it the better men by a pint of bitter each. Again we stood on the platform. The objects of our curiosity were walking up and down; they drew near to us. I felt Ned start, saw a flush come to his cheek; then his hand gripped my arm.

'There, there! By Jove, she's got it in her hand; look!' he whispered loudly. And, sure enough, she had the rosebud in her dainty fingers, and was enjoying its perfume, while from her lips and eyes, unseen by the grim guardian beside her, there beamed a most gracious and bewitching smile on Ned.

Directly they had passed us Ned gave vent to his feelings by giving me a triumphant dig in the ribs, and indulging in a series of eccentric evolutions expressive of intense delight. I was really in mortal fear lest he should irrevocably commit himself with the young lady and her father by some rash and insane procedure. But I was thankful to find that the expression of his passionate admiration and joy was confined to a look and a smile.

At last that inexorable tyrant Time, who will wait for no man, brought the hour appointed for the train to start by which our fair unknown was to be suddenly whirled away from our sight. Some minutes before the train was due we became aware that her departure was at hand from the excited manner and ceaseless bustle of the old gentleman. At length, with deafening whistle and grinding creak, up came the train. A confused mass of struggling passengers and officials, excruciating cries of 'Any more for the Hitchin train?' 'This way for the Hitchin train!' 'Take your seats, please, for the Hitchin train!' 'Tickets, please!' A shrill whistle from the inspector, a piercing shriek in answer from the engine—jumble, jolt, rumble, snort, puff, fume—the train is off. A fair head peering from a window, a pretty hand kissed, a rosebud waved, and the great bridge's archway shuts out from our sight the last glimpse of our fair unknown. Wistfully

Ned gazed down the track along which his enchantress had vanished, his thoughts all chasing the flying train.

At length I stole him from his reverie, persuaded him to refresh himself with one more glass of beer, and then we both left the station. And, certes, our walk home was not a lively one; for not a word could I extract from Ned, by fair means or foul, during the whole of the way.

It was some time before Ned got over his sudden attack of love-fever; but at length I and one or two others of his friends, to whom I had confided the story, laughed and chaffed him out of it, until he began to see the egregious folly and the extreme stupidity of growing spooney on a girl whom he had only seen once in his life, and that just for an hour, to whom he had never spoken a word, and whom, in all human probability, he would never set eyes upon again.

Well, the subject was forgotten between us; other events, the usual exhilarating incidents of a May-term, and adventures of various descriptions, served to dispel from Ned's mind the image of the fair 'Stationer,' as we chaffingly called her.

One beautiful evening towards the close of the term, Ned and I had driven over to a village some ten miles distant, where was an inn, in which inn were three very lively and agreeable young ladies, and eke some excellent malt liquor. It was a drive which we were often in the habit of taking; and, indeed, not we only, but many other members of our time-honoured seat of learning. For in this inn the undergraduate mind was pervaded with a sense of rural quiet and enjoyment which was inexpressibly refreshing after the disagreeable

racket of the University, rows with lecturers, and notices from deans. With perfect truth, I may say that never have I passed more peaceful and happy hours than when stretched idly on its garden grass, soothed by the 'balmy bliss' of pipe and pewter, while through the window came, ringing merrily, the laughter and the prattle of the pretty barmaids.

Old Rose Inn, should these pages ever meet the eye of thine occupants, I would tell them that all my memories of thee are jolly; that it is pleasant now to look back upon the hours which I have spent within thy walls; that, as I sit now in my dingy rooms in town, I can see thy white gables and thy swinging sign-board; I can smell the scent of roses in thy garden; I can see the greensward where I have so often lain; I can hear the bees humming in that old nest of theirs in the hollow of the wall; I can see the big parlour with its burnished pewters; I can see the beefsteaks smoking on the board; and I can see our company, hungry from their ride, revelling in the simple feast.

Old Rose Inn, when I smoke my solitary evening pipe, I can see thee and thine so plainly in my mind's eye, that I could fancy I was once more a freshman making a jolly evening of it beneath thy comfortable old roof, and forgetting the existence of deans and tutors, exams and chapels, under the influence of thy hospitable cheer. For thy beer, old Rose Inn, had such power as poets gave to Lethé's fabled waters. Once quaff a long draught from the cool refreshing pewter and 'the Varsity,' with all its anxieties and cares, its duns and its dons, was for the time obliterated from the memory, only to be recalled when that swift sharp rush

was made, in cap and gown, from the stables, and we glided breathless through the porter's lodge as the last stroke of twelve was booming through the night air.

Again, again must I entreat thy pardon, gracious reader, for this long digression; but did I not tell thee at the outset that this is a sketch of reminiscences as well as of adventures of a May-term; and what reminiscences of a May-term would be complete without mention of the old Rose Inn, the rendezvous of so many good and jolly fellows in the sunny days of May? Be satisfied; I have now pulled my Fancy in; she is apt to bolt with me, as you have no doubt discovered; but the curb is too strong to allow her to gallop far with me.

If you can carry your recollection so far back as the point from which this digression started, you will remember that I stated that one evening—it is scarcely necessary to say it was a beautiful evening—Ned and I drove over to this Rose Inn, the memories and associations connected with which have had, as you have seen, such a powerful effect upon my feelings. We had spent, as usual, a very jolly evening there, and were returning home in the bright moonlight, the old mare trotting bravely out at ten miles an hour, when we arrived at a village which was about half-way between the limits of our journey. Here we always felt bound to stop for purposes of 'liquoring up;' and here, accordingly, we pulled up on the present occasion.

Just as we arrived a trap was leaving the door; it was forced to pass very close to us on account of a horse-trough in front of the house. There was one person seated in it, an elderly gentleman. His features seemed familiar to me; but I could not recollect

where I had seen him before. In another instant I should have forgotten all about him, had I not felt my arm suddenly grasped by Ned, who was closer to the old party than I was.

'By Jove, Tom, the "Stationer's" governor!' he exclaimed.

I looked round at him, and sure enough it was he—the companion of our will-o'-the-wisp charmer at the station.

'Boy,' said I, leaning over to speak to a youth who was about to hold our mare,—'boy, who is that old fellow, and where does he live?'

'I dun't knoa who a be,' answered the boy; 'but a lives not aboove a moile from this'n on the roight soide o' the road.'

'Let's follow the old fellow and find out where he keeps,' said Ned.

'Nonsense,' I replied; 'let's have some beer and be off home.'

But as Ned was urgent in his entreaties that I should follow the old fellow, and as all his old passion seemed suddenly rekindled, I consented to go, at the same time prudently adopting precautions against any rash proceedings on Ned's part, by taking up on the back seat the small boy who had given such information as he could with reference to the old gentleman and his whereabouts.

So we turned, and proceeded cautiously to track our elderly quarry to his den. We went slowly, and kept just within earshot of his wheels. At last he stopped: we drove steadily on, and passed him just as he was taking his horse through a gate which was the entrance to an avenue, leading to a house embosomed among trees.

'Now we've spotted him,' said I, 'and we may as well turn back.'

'Not a bit of it,' rejoined Ned. 'I intend to go down and recon-

noitre, and try to get a glimpse of her.'

After a short discussion as to the advisability of this plan, I finally gave in; and remarking, 'Well, well, Wilful must what Wilful will,' I pulled the trap up alongside the hedge; and giving the mare into the boy's hands, with awful warnings and strict injunctions as to faithfulness and secrecy on pain of losing the very substantial reward which awaited him if he served us truly, we both walked warily down the avenue towards the house.

It was a good-sized, square, commodious building, with no pretensions to architectural beauty, surrounded entirely with wood, and with a smooth spacious lawn in front. So much we made of it as we surveyed it from among the trees. We were on the point of advancing nearer, when we were startled by the sound of voices and footsteps, and there emerged from some back part of the establishment the master himself, accompanied by one of his men-servants. They passed within a short distance of us, and in passing there fell a remark from the old gentleman which caused both of us to prick up our ears. He asked his man this question, 'Did your young mistress take her ride to-day?' 'She did, sir,' was the man's answer.

Here, then, was something gained, at any rate. We were now certain that the young lady resided there, and all that we had to do hereafter was to find some opportunity or devise some plan for meeting her. But Ned was not satisfied until he had made an attempt that very night to catch a glimpse of the object of our search; so he proceeded to grope his way along the wall until he came to a window on the ground-floor, in which was a light. But

the blinds were down, and all his efforts to obtain a vision of the interior of the room were unavailing. At last the shadow of a female figure flitted across the blind. Ned was positive in his assertions that it was our heroine, and no one else; and though I thought that it might have been, with at least equal probability, the shadow of a servant-maid, I held my tongue, and humoured him in his fancy; and finally with some difficulty induced him to tear himself away from the spot which contained so much that was dear to him.

Our young guide having been rewarded with half-a-crown from each of us, and having been strictly enjoined to secrecy, we rattled off at a smart pace home. But all our efforts to reach college before midnight were unavailing. We only got alanged by the stable-keeper for distressing his horse, and did not reach our rooms till 12.30; for which flagrant irregularity we had duly to account to the dean the following morning.

II.

It is needless to recount the several unsuccessful expeditions which we undertook in search of the 'Stationer.' We went past the house almost every day, strolled round it, but all to no purpose: she was invisible.

It was, I should think, some ten days after our first nocturnal visit to the house that we drove out one evening, as was our wont, not to look after the 'Stationer'—for we had given her up as hopeless—but to spend a jolly evening at the Rose. We had driven through the village which contained our half-way house, and were on the open road again,

when we observed a lady on horseback in front of us. She was walking her horse quietly along the side of the road; but the animal, hearing our wheels behind it, began to quicken its pace, went off at a canter, and was lost to our view through a turning of the road. On driving round the corner, we found the lady standing at a gate which her horse was too restless to allow her to open. Influenced by a natural feeling of gallantry, I pulled up our horse, and Ned jumped out to unfasten the gate. On hearing us stop, the lady turned her head, and by so doing displayed to our view the well-known features of the 'Stationer.' There was a little confusion and some blushes on all sides as Ned politely took off his hat, and I did the same, whilst she acknowledged our salute with a bow. As he was leading her horse through the gate—and an uncommonly hard gate to open it was, to judge from the time occupied in the operation—Ned managed cleverly to slip into her hand a *billet doux*, composed something like a week before, and some whispered words passed between them, of a tender amorous nature, I imagine; at all events, Ned came back to the trap with his face one glow of delight, whilst, with a wave of her hand and a toss of her pretty head, the lovely 'Stationer' cantered down the avenue.

'Well, what's the game now?' I asked, as soon as Ned was re-seated in the trap, and we were fairly off.

'Why, I'm to be there a little after ten to-night. The old gentleman is ill in bed, and she'll be there to meet me.'

'Nonsense!' said I, incredulously.

'True, upon my word!' returned Ned warmly. 'Look here!' hold-

ing up a tiny little gold whistle. 'She gave me this. I'm to blow softly on it under the window—that's the signal; then she'll come.'

'Well, I'm blessed! You are a lucky fellow, Ned, to be in for such a capitally romantic love-adventure already.' And I will confess to a little pang of jealousy as I made the remark.

There were several fellows over at the Rose when we arrived, but, as you may imagine, all our united efforts failed to get much jolly companionship out of Ned; he was completely preoccupied, and was longing secretly for the hour of our departure to arrive. At last that hour came.

The evening had quite changed; the sky was cloudy, the night dark, and fitful gusts of wind, accompanied by a steady drizzling rain, made driving anything but comfortable, especially as we were totally unprepared for such a change of weather.

It was agreed that we were both to proceed together to the house, as in case of accident it was better that I should be within hail to come to Ned's assistance. So we put up our trap at a small roadside inn, with orders that the horse was to be left in the shafts, as we should very shortly return, and then we trudged steadily along to the entrance-gate. On arriving in the vicinity of the house, I took up my position under a fine old tree, which was furnished with a seat, and, having lit my pipe previously, I told Ned that I would wait for him there, at the same time conjuring him to make his interview as short as possible, in consideration of his friend exposed to the inclement elements.

My companion disappeared in the darkness, and I was left alone with my thoughts. I strained my ears to catch any sound by which

to learn whether Ned had been 'sold' or not in the appointment made by this lively and not very scrupulous young lady. I succeeded in detecting a very low soft whistle, and, some minutes afterwards, I fancied that I heard a window gently and cautiously drawn up. At all events Ned did not return, so I concluded that his enslaver had kept her appointment, and that he was now in the Elysium of her presence.

Slowly, very slowly—wearily, very wearily—did the minutes drag themselves along. I seemed to have been waiting there more than an hour when I fell into a profound 'brown study,' from which I was suddenly startled by a sharp ringing sound, then all was silent. I listened attentively. Presently a window was carefully let down; then I heard a loud 'Ist!' from Ned, to which I responded, and advanced towards the house. I whispered loudly, 'Ned!' and was answered directly by, 'Here you are!' 'Come on,' I whispered again; and I could just trace the outline of a figure groping its way along the wall or side of the house. 'Coming,' was the answer. When all of a sudden there was a loud exclamation, a tremendous crash, and down came Ned, head over heels, to my very feet, amidst a mingled ruin of plants and pottery. I felt my heart jump to my mouth, as the saying is, at the sound. But I recovered my self-possession directly, and at once commenced to drag Ned away, who was lying where he had fallen, growling and rubbing his shins. I pulled him into the doorway of an outhouse which was as dark as pitch; and we were only just in time too, for a window above was violently thrown up, and a hoarse gruff voice demanded, 'Who's there?' After repeating

this demand two or three times, the voice exclaimed fiercely, 'If you don't answer I shall fire!' and straightway we heard the click of a hammer, and, a second later, a bright flash of fire streamed down from the window, while the woods echoed to the report of a pistol.

'By Jove,' whispered I, 'it's a lucky job I lugged you away so soon, or else you'd have stood a good chance of having a bullet in your carcass by this time; the old fellow fired slap down where the noise came from.'

We lay perfectly still for a few minutes; but then, hearing sounds of persons moving about inside, we considered it advisable to make off, as it seemed probable that the old gentleman had roused the house. So we glided off among the trees, and when we got fairly away from the grounds we bolted like fawns along the road, until we arrived at our roadside inn. In another moment we were seated in our trap, and were off homewards at a pace that defied pursuit.

As soon as we had both recovered our breath and collected our disturbed senses, I began to speak.

'Well, Ned, you're a nice fellow to go about on secret adventures at night; if you always kick up such an infernal row as that when you're engaged in such enterprises, it's my opinion that you won't be long before you come to grief.'

'Hang it,' said Ned, 'I didn't know those confounded flower-pots and steps were there, or else I shouldn't have tumbled over them, and barked my shins, and bruised my arms and ribs, as I have done.'

'Who made that first row?' I asked.

'O, that was Carry!' ('Humph, her name is Carry, is it?' thought

I.) 'She hitched her dress, by some means or other, in a large tray, which came tumbling down, frightening us out of our wits; and then, you know, she had to shut the window down, and cut away like steam.'

'You saw your charming "Stationer," then?' I inquired.

'My dear fellow, yes; and she's the jolliest girl I ever met in my life.'

'Well, how are you going to manage about seeing her again?'

'O, we've arranged all about that! The day after to-morrow is the village-feast, and her governor goes to London the evening before, if he's well enough, and all the servants and people about will be at the feast, so we shall be nice and quiet.'

'Yes; but suppose the governor isn't well enough to go to London, how then?'

'O, she's to write and let me know in the morning.'

'Well, I'm sure, you two have settled matters very coolly and comfortably between yourselves.'

With this closing observation of mine the conversation terminated. Such was our adventure, the success of which, in my estimation, was dubious; but Ned was of opinion that nothing could have been more completely successful and delightful than its results.

The 'day after to-morrow' came, and with it came a letter for Ned from Carry, informing him that her father had gone off to London on the evening previous, and would probably stay there a fortnight or more. This was welcome news for Ned, who, I am convinced, thought of nothing but the prospective meeting all day, though I kept him hard at work at cricket for some two or three hours on 'the Piece.'

At last we started, and in half an hour pulled up at our half-way

house, which was the head-quarters of the village-feast. We found several 'Varsity men' there already, and the usual amount of loutish country yokels escorting their sweethearts with a degree of ease and grace which one might expect a rhinoceros to display in beaving about a young antelope. There was also a large dancing-booth, in which the same personages footed it 'on the light fantastic toe' with as much elegance as a newly-imported and totally - uneducated Polar bear might exhibit in his first trial on hot bricks. However, these simple folks seemed to be enjoying themselves to the full, in their rough homely manner. And even we, proud aristocrats, did not disdain to take a partner in a country jig on the green outside the booth; as we found that place close and stifling to a degree which our pampered natures were unable to endure. And many were the scowls and ill-favoured glances which we received from indignant and jealous John, as he saw his Mary tripping it about with a young college-gent.

Then we amused ourselves by sitting with the elderly parties, old farmers quietly smoking their pipes, and by making them drink beer to an extent which they had never experienced before; then, as they grew jollier and jollier, we struck up songs with rollicking choruses, to which the company did ample justice.

We 'Varsity men' agreed among ourselves all to leave at once, in case there should be any ill-feeling towards us displayed by the already half-tipsy yokels. Having made this prudent agreement, I, by and by, received a signal from Ned; whereupon I joined him, and we both left the inn and strolled up the village towards the house which had the distin-

guished honour of holding that priceless treasure yecept Carry, or, more familiarly, the 'Stationer.'

We discovered that young lady walking among the shrubberies, and after Ned had formally introduced me to her, the young couple wandered off together, leaving me to recline and smoke my pipe at my leisure.

I had been lying there some time, when, finding that the grass had become unpleasantly damp, I rose to my feet, and began to take a short promenade, in which exercise I was presently interrupted by no less a person than the gardener, as I soon learnt. He came up to me, and said, somewhat gruffly,

'What be you a-doin' 'ere at this toime o' noight, young man?'

'Who may you be, my friend?' asked I.

'Who be I? I be the gardener; and it be moy bissiness to turn all stragglers off these 'ere grounds.'

'Indeed,' said I coolly, leaning against a tree as I spoke; 'but suppose a straggler doesn't choose to go away for you, eh?'

'I'll foind summun as ull make 'im goo.'

'Nonsense, my good fellow,' said I carelessly, 'you know better. Here's half-a-crown for you; you can go away; and if I find that you've held your tongue, I'll give you half-a-sovereign when I see you again.'

'Thankee, sur; you're a gentleman;' and, touching his hat and tipping me a knowing wink as he did so, the gardener went away.

Before long, but not before I was heartily tired of waiting, Master Ned made his appearance, evidently in a high state of happiness; and we retraced our steps to the feast, Ned all the way along launching out into the most rapturous descriptions of the

general beauty and perfections of his newly-found inamorata.

On arriving at the scene of festivity, we found some little commotion existing, owing to the arrival of a party of rather inebriated undergraduates, who were too reckless to care what they did or whom they insulted. So, during our absence, one of the party, a tall handsome fellow, had been amusing himself by knocking off the hats of all the country bumpkins who came within his reach, and then, with the gravest possible politeness, handing to each man whose hat had suffered a shilling by way of compensation. However, in time this joke grew rather too serious; dissatisfied murmurs and ominous grumbings began to make themselves heard from various parts of the crowd. Things had reached this pitch when we returned. We were at once appealed to by the few sober 'Varsity men' present to do our best to get these noisy fellows away before any more harm was done. I fortunately happened to know the big fellow who was making himself most conspicuous; so I led him aside, and succeeded in so far quieting him that he listened to reason, and agreed to leave the place directly along with the rest of us.

We were working our way out through the crowd, when my big unruly friend found an impediment in his path in the shape of a huge country lout, who was standing with his back towards us talking to a girl. Giving him a violent push, my noisy comrade exclaimed aloud, 'Now then, you great yokel-hog, make room!' The fellow turned round savagely, stared at us, and then, stretching his face forwards, shouted, 'Who are yer callin' a yokel-og, yer college-snob?' as he said these words he put himself in a defiant

attitude right in front of us. My friend's only answer was a swinging left-hander straight from the shoulder, which sent the bucolic spinning back among the crowd. 'A fight, a fight!' was the cry directly. The man who had been hit jumped forward, and lunged out viciously with a sweeping hit at his antagonist; but my friend was sober enough to box, the blow was guarded, and a crashing right-handed slog sent the enraged bumpkin on his back and taught him that it was dangerous to meddle with a man who had rowed 'five' in the 'Varsity boat.' This was the signal for a general onset. We were attacked on all sides, for the country lads had their blood now thoroughly up. Our party were, fortunately, all together. We numbered about a dozen, of whom all, with the exception of two, were big, strong, able men. The two non-fighting men we succeeded in getting out unobserved, and instructed them to have the horses put to directly, whilst we defended ourselves as well as we could against the louts. And a very formidable defence we made for a good quarter of an hour, and many a horny-handed young boor found out to his cost how hard 'the college gentlemen' could hit. At last we received intelligence that our horses and traps were ready. The louts were beginning to outnumber us, and we had to fight our way slowly, step by step, back to the door, through which we began, one by one, to retreat. How we should ever have managed to make good our escape and gain our traps in safety, but for the plucky dodge of the fellow who first commenced the row, I am at a loss to conceive. He spied a great wooden bar behind the door, which was used in fastening it up; seizing this in both hands, he made a rush at the

mob. Swinging it in his powerful arms, he felled two or three of the foremost of the foe, and made the rest all recoil before him, as he whirled this tremendous club around his head. Then quickly darting inside, he shut the door, put the bar across it, and in another minute we were all off at a gallop amid the hoots and yells of the baffled rustics. And most fervently did we thank our stars for such an extremely fortunate extrication from that very awkward and disagreeable dilemma.

As none of Ned's subsequent interviews with his darling Carry were signalised by any mishap or incident worthy of record, I shall pass them over without notice, merely stating that they were frequent and satisfactory. He had now dispensed with my services as a companion on these occasions; and it was, therefore, with some surprise and a deep sense of the honour conferred upon me that I found myself once more asked to accompany Ned on one of his visits of affection. He had received from the 'Stationer' an invitation to a large tea-drinking in the open air, in which ceremony she was to assist by presiding over a tray; and as my name was included in the invitation, I consented to go with Ned. Nor shall I readily forget the calm manner in which he went up and shook hands with her before all the company, and then comfortably seated himself by her side. Everything was done in such an open manner that it was impossible for any one to harbour any suspicion; it was quite natural, people thought, that she should act in a warm and friendly manner towards one who was evidently a near relation. He walked home with her when the proceedings terminated, and then returned to college with me, during the

space of half an hour pouring the tale of all his love into my drowsy and not very attentive ear. From what I saw that day I judged that my friend's suit was progressing as favourably as even his most sanguine hopes could have anticipated. I heard very little of his proceedings for sometime after, until one day he came to me with a very long face, and informed me that he had got into a hobble from which he wished me to assist him in extricating himself. He then began a dismal story, from which I gathered that he had made an arrangement to travel up to London by train with the young lady; but that, unfortunately, the letter containing the definite announcement of his plans had accidentally fallen, either in whole or in part, into the possession of the housekeeper, who had made the young lady's father acquainted with this pleasant little scheme for travelling, and it had, accordingly, been knocked on the head. He therefore now asked my advice on the subject as to what further steps he should take in the matter. I gave it to him; it briefly amounted to this: 'Don't get into hot-water about that girl. Leave this travelling scheme alone, and be content to wait till the end of the Long before you see her again, when all this unpleasantness will have blown over.' This was very good advice, no doubt; but it was not the kind of advice which an ardent lover was likely to acquiesce in, and it was, therefore, not very surprising that Ned utterly scouted such an idea.

A day or two after, he came and informed me that he had hit upon another device, in which he required my assistance in order to carry it successfully into execution. He was going, he said, to take a dogcart and pick her

up at a place agreed upon between them, then drive to some station a few miles off, so as to put the old people off the scent, and thence book to London. What on earth they were going to do when they got there, he did not explain. He wanted me to accompany him to drive the trap back again to the livery-stables.

I was dull in spirits and in want of some excitement, so, strange as it may seem, I agreed to this proposal without much hesitation. The day appointed arrived, and we drove to the trysting-place; but there was no appearance of the young lady—not a vestige of her was to be seen. We waited an hour, two hours, two hours and a half: still no symptoms of the approach of the fair runaway. At last, in despair, we gave the case up as hopeless, and Ned drove back, gloomy and disconsolate.

The next morning Miss Carry's non-appearance at the rendezvous was satisfactorily explained by a letter from her own hand. Her father had returned suddenly from town, had lectured her severely on her levity and impropriety of conduct, and, finally, had insisted on her accompanying him immediately down to Devonshire, whither she would already be on her journey when Ned received her letter. The epistle concluded with a most affectionate farewell, and earnest hopes of a future meeting under more propitious circumstances. She stated that her father was in ignorance of Ned's name, but that he had intimated his intention of making strict inquiries with the view of discovering it. She felt perfectly confident that Ned would trust *her* not to betray him.

And so the affair ended; for I recommended Ned to go off home at once, and trust to chance for

receiving information of his lady-love. This time he took my advice, and—would you believe it?—when we met again, after the Long, he positively assured me that there was not left in his heart a trace of the spell which had been thrown over him by the bright eyes and sunny smiles of the 'Stationer.'

A year flew by, and once more it was the May-term—this time for us a May-term of stern and dread importance, for at the close of it loomed gigantic that terrible ordeal through which it is necessary to pass before the eye can be gratified with the sight of those pleasant letters B.A. appended to one's name. For this event Ned and I were both vigorously preparing, having, as is usually the case, spent seven terms in idleness, and then crammed all the reading, which should have been the work of three years, into the short space of two terms, or even less time than that.

I was one morning sitting in my rooms after breakfast, smoking my early pipe and opening my letters, when Ned made his appearance, as he very often did at that time of the day, for he kept on the next staircase to me. I was engaged in perusing a letter at the moment he entered, so with the brief salutation, 'Morning, old fellow!' he sat down and smoked in silence. Having finished the document on which I had been intent, I placed it on the table, threw one leg over the arm of the chair, and, turning to Ned, said,

'Ned, that rich uncle of mine, whom you have often heard me speak of, has taken it into his head to come and pay a visit to this time-honoured and ancient seat of learning. He is bringing his wife with him and a young lady, whose name I can't decipher, an orphan,

whom he and my aunt have lately adopted; so I shall expect you to give me your valuable assistance in lionising them about.'

'Only too happy, I'm sure,' grunted Ned, without taking his pipe from his lips.

'Well, they'll be here on Wednesday evening; so I shall expect you to come to breakfast at nine o'clock on Thursday, to be formally introduced to them.'

'All right,' was my friend's reply, and the conversation turned upon other topics.

On the Wednesday evening I went to meet them at the station; and there were certain points about my manner of welcoming them, which, to any one acquainted with my ordinary habits and behaviour, would have seemed perfectly unaccountable. I had certainly not seen my worthy aunt and uncle for nearly two years; but was there anything in that circumstance to account for the profound astonishment and bewildered gaze with which I greeted them as they stepped from their carriage to the platform? Had any wonderful change taken place in their appearance to afford any clue to the wild confusion in my brain which prompted me to make countless mistakes about the luggage, and even, after most of them had been rectified, to succeed eventually in bringing a wrong box up to the hotel, which I was compelled to send back and exchange for the right one? And after I had left them for the night, what pretext could their arrival give for my sitting in my chair for hours almost, meditating deeply, to the total neglect of my usual evening pipe? Whatever may have been the reasons for such conduct, certain it is that, when I finally rose to retire to bed, they induced me to give way to such a series of chuckles and such fric-

tion of the hands, as would have impressed any casual beholder with the conviction that too much reading had unsettled my brain. I hope, reader, that I shall be able anon to account to you satisfactorily for these eccentric symptoms, so as at once to banish from *your* mind any suspicions of mental derangement.

Before the time appointed the following morning, Ned was in my rooms, and not long after my guests made their appearance. Then I had to go through the ceremony of introducing them to Mr. Edward Jackson. 'Mrs. Crofton, Mr. Jackson.' 'Mr. Crofton, Mr. Jackson.' 'Miss Cartwright, Mr. Jackson.' O, but you should have seen Ned's face as I introduced him to the last-named person! The astonishment and incredulity, the bewilderment and doubt, depicted on his features and expressed in his blank stare were fine; but finer still was the deep blush which dyed the young lady's cheeks, and sent the blood tingling to the roots of Ned's hair, and the painful confusion with which they bowed to one another. For whom should Ned see before him but the 'Stationer,' the lovely Carry, the heroine of so many of his adventures! You can easily guess now, reader, the reason for my strange display of feeling the night before.

I had purposely left my friend in the dark as to the identity of the young lady to whom he was to be introduced, because I wished to see whether his heart had really recovered from the wounds which those bright eyes had before inflicted on it, and whether he really was as callous to her charms as he had asserted himself to be even before three months had elapsed from the time of their separation. I enjoyed their em-

barrassment for a moment, and then set them somewhat at their ease by saying, with a little malice perhaps,

'I think, Miss Cartwright, you and Mr. Jackson have met upon a former occasion, have you not? I beg your pardon for not recollecting the circumstance.'

However, they soon recovered their self-possession, lost the feeling of restraint which at first tied them down, and chatted away gaily together.

And this was the 'Stationer,' the wild heroine of so many reckless escapades! But how changed! How quiet, how sedate, how modest and proper now! And this was no hypocritical mask to deceive her guardians: this change pervaded her whole demeanour, her every action; and one could not help being sensible at once that it was real, there was the ring of true metal about it. Who could have supposed that the wild impetuous girl of a year ago could so soon have toned down into this dear, good, lovable creature! But I was not long before I learnt from my aunt the cause of this alteration. The young lady's father had met with a terrible accident; he had lingered for some time in exquisite agony, and had then died. His daughter Carry, his only child, had nursed him with the tenderest care throughout the whole period of his pain and suffering. Him whom, in the exuberance of her reckless young spirits, she used to detest for his sternness she now learnt to love; for she saw how much deep affection for her had been mingled with that apparent harshness. And the long days and nights which she passed beside that bed of agony brought out all that was tender and womanly in her nature, and softened all that was hard and rebellious,

and left her the girl whom my aunt described as the kindest, gentlest, most amiable creature she had ever met.

And she did not give Ned the cold shoulder; she did not cut him because she was ashamed of their former intimacy; but she very briefly showed him that adventure of theirs in its true light, and induced him to confess how foolish and wrong it really was; and then they came tacitly to the agreement, 'let bygones be bygones.'

So Ned lionised her about; and, I am sure, took much more interest in finding out quaint sights and picturesque views than ever I could have supposed him capable of displaying. And then they began again to venture on the dangerous ground of 'old times,' until one day (so Ned told me) she took from a pretty little pocket-book a wee piece of silver tissue-paper, on her unfolding which Ned saw a faded rosebud. She held it laughingly up, and said, 'You see I still keep this souvenir of my wicked wild days.'

How could any one resist such an appeal! Ned could not; and before that rosebud was put back into its tissue-paper those two had renewed their troth, no longer the wild escapade of two reckless young scapegraces, but the sober union of two loving hearts.

And now they're married, and I have just paid them a visit; not the first, though, by any means, since their wedded life began. And we often laugh and talk, and ponder gravely too sometimes, over the adventures of that May-term, when that now happy married couple were so wild and foolish; and a certain yellow and faded rosebud is often taken out and looked at, and as they gaze at it I think grave thoughts are

mingled with their merriment; and I doubt not they both breathe a prayer of thankfulness from the bottom of their hearts that the adventure of their foolish days was so suddenly cut short, and that from its interruption has sprung that mellowed wisdom which gives them rich promise of a long life of happiness.

Well, these are some of my reminiscences and adventures of a May-term; and as I think over them I wonder whether Cantabs ever experience anything of the same sort now. I suppose they do. 'There's nothing new under the sun;' and I daresay my reminiscences will closely resemble those of many now.

They are very jolly, these recollections of the past; and yet I think there must be very few 'Varsity men' who don't look back upon their college-days with some slight feeling of regret mixed with the undeniable pleasure which the retrospect affords, regret that they did not make quite so much of those three short glorious years as they might have done. Rare times, halcyon days indeed, were they! And at the very farthest limit to which our span of age may reach they will still be clear to the sight of memory, standing out in bold relief like three great mountain-peaks in the far-off dim past. Freshly and vividly enough do their reminiscences come up before me now. While I have been penning these pages I have been once more a freshman, a second-year man, and a third-year man in due rotation; and now, as I lay down my pen and awake from my reverie, it is with a sigh that I think there are now no more May-terms for me. I have bidden the dear old 'Varsity a long farewell, and my place there knows me no more.

DINNERS IN MANY PLACES.

'We can live without love: what is passion
but pining?
But where is the man who can live with-
out dining?'

'GIVE me good, plain, honest English fare,' says John Bull abroad, to the disparagement of what he calls 'foreign kickshaws;' 'I don't want anything else.' Yet the most particular man in existence, as to affairs of the palate, is this frugal-minded, Spartan-tasted, boastful Briton; and the 'Mossoo' at whom he sneers for putting his knife half-way down his throat, or the American who flies at his food like a starved tiger, swallows ill-cooked ill-served victuals with a better grace than John Bull, with all his assumption of simplicity.

Every one who has seen men and manners by travelling would probably, if he could strike a balance between the good and bad dinners he has eaten, find it very even. And even in this gastronomic age, when none but the most ardent of explorers can find spots where absolutely a decent meal is not to be had for love or money, we may run back over dinners eaten in strange places and under various circumstances, and in them find much that is amusing and instructive, when put into a collected shape.

Let us consider first that modern symposium, a dinner given by one of the great City Companies of London. It is not the good fortune of every ordinary mortal to possess sufficient interest in high places for a ticket to one of these banquets (we call the daintily-printed fancifully-en-

graved card of invitation a 'ticket,' because as such it is described by the guardians of the doorway); but he who has been thus favoured may write the experience down as one not easily to be forgotten. Let the inexperienced one picture to himself a noble many-raftered hall, grand in its vastness of length, height, and width; venerable with its gorgeously painted windows, its black-oak panelling, and its memories of many hundreds of years of grand banquets and cheery reunions, and of many hundred names famous in all the arts of war and peace; beautiful with the snowiest of table-cloths, the rarest of flowers, and the most exquisite of gold and silver plate; proportions and details bathed in the soft gentle light which only wax candles can shed, and spread before him everything which can make a modern civic banquet the very perfection of luxury, elegance, and refinement; let him pick out a seat from which he may observe everything unobserved, and let him arm himself, in imagination, with the appetite of Milo the Cretonian, who

'An ox slew with his fist,
And ate it up at one meal;
Ye gods! what a glorious twist!'

(as says the inscription over the doorway of the Queen's Hotel, the old Bull and Mouth, in Aldersgate-street), and sit down.

Yes, sit down and prepare as for combat; for, look you, this menu, light and sparkling as it reads beneath its French disguise, is no frothy bubbling matter, but a stern list which must be attack-

ed and conquered at any cost—at least, so seem to think the good hosts who convene the banquet. The most appetising of soups, the rarest of fish, the daintiest of entrées and side-dishes, the noblest of joints, the most delicate of feathered rarities, follow each other in swift silent succession, washed down or titillated by hocks and sherries of the oldest and purest and most extravagant vintages. Then, after he has dipped into a dozen dishes of sweets, fruits, and preserves, let him clear his mouth with an olive, the shape (and almost the size) of a Rugby football, in preparation for the aftermath. The aftermath consists of a prolonged dally with wines of a rarity and purity unknown to three-quarters of the poor fellows who, from ten to five, every day struggle for their daily crumbs, close by these very walls; of a half-sleepy enchantment of admirably rendered music; of a continual glow of patriotism and self-applause, occasioned by speeches from gallant soldiers and sailors, impressive bishops and well-satisfied statesmen. Only a good cigar is needed to make the position Elysian; for the grand charm lies in the fact, that at these big dinners we are such atoms, we are so independent in our humility, we are so contented to have everything done for us, and so delighted in comparing the positions of the bustling waiters with that of the ‘nobs,’ upon whom falls the onerous duty of speechmaking and universal congratulation. Right well contented do we rise when we begin to experience a feeling of weariness, don our overcoats, receive at the hands of a gorgeous official a splendid Henry Clay, and a case of variegated sweets, known as a ‘hush box,’ and turn homewards, brimful of

kindly thoughts towards mankind in general and City Companies in particular.

Let us peel off the ‘claw-hammer’ coat, the faultless tie, and the glittering patent leathers, and change the scene to the west coast goldfields of New Zealand.

We are bronzed like Zouaves, bearded like pards, our red shirt-sleeves tucked above our elbows, and our moleskin breeches tucked into our big boots. It is midday, and we are very, very hungry, for we have been sifting and scouring under a blazing sun since six o’clock this morning—sifting and scouring some dozen ‘buckets’ of wash-dirt, which means pretty hard labour if we look at the ratio rule that two dishes of ‘wash-dirt’ equal one bucket, sixty buckets equal one ‘load,’ and one ‘load’ equals a ton of earth. Very gladly we throw down pickaxe and sieve, and turn into our ‘six by eight’ tent for the midday meal. Good native meat, rich fat mutton, the universal ‘damper,’ and British beer, with a final touch of ‘old peculiar’—that is, if we happen to have been in luck, or have not been down town very much of late. In that case, ‘damper’ and the ‘old peculiar’ have to be put up with. A bad old custom that, so say the moralists at home, of ‘nipping’ old peculiar and other ‘short’ drinks, and perhaps it is when taken as these ‘nips’ are at the clubs of the far East, and in too many houses at home; but when well earned, they are not only grateful, but almost necessary as medicinal, as men will tell you who know what it is to work hour after hour in all sorts of weather and under all conditions. Well, we aling our kettle and we mix our ‘damper,’ and we light a pipe whilst the banquet is preparing. Then we fall to. We forget to say

grace, or unfold our napkins; but some day we hope that our little pailfuls of dirt will enable us to live where we can do both; after the meat, somebody—probably a ‘new chum’—produces canned fruits or a bottled delicacy; and the same knives which hewed through mutton and mixed the flour of the ‘damper,’ wiped on our moleskins, or perhaps not at all, serve for the division of the sweets. Then a pipe at our ease under the tent shade, and back to our arm-aching, often heart-breaking, labour, which, however, on this occasion, seems light after so sumptuous a repast. Very often the meals are enlivened by disturbances outside, to which very little attention is paid unless they assume the proportions of a regular row. Dennis O’Hegan and Terence Macdermot find the after-dinner siesta a capital opportunity for raising and discussing questions of well-known difference between them. Sometimes they may be quieted by a few judicious words from their friends; but there are questions, principally relative to family distinctions and descent, which invariably act on them as does a red rag on a bull. Six-shooters are brought into play, knives are whirled about, other O’Hegans and Macdermots are attracted to the battle-field, and there is no peace in camp until one or other party is satisfied and a good deal of blood has been shed. However, these scenes, thanks to a vigilant administration, are much rarer now than in the old days of the first gold rush; and a regular fight is something, when found, to be made note of.

Well, good-bye to the west coast and O’Hegan and Macdermot, and over fifteen thousand miles back to the old country of before-dinner blessings and napkins.

Her Majesty’s 138th regiment of Middlesex Rifle Volunteers are encamped on the bleakest of bleak Surrey commons. They are under canvas here for a week, and are trying to think that they are only playing at soldiers. If it were not for the presence of the gray uniforms one might imagine oneself in a camp of regulars, in so thoroughly a soldier-like and business-like manner is everything conducted. It has been raining incessantly for four days, and these gentlemen—yes, gentlemen by birth and education—accustomed to their morning tubs, and their cosy clean beds, and their nine-o’clock breakfasts, and their life almost of *otium cum dignitate*, have been quartered here, exposed to all sorts of weather, huddled together ten in a tent, without even a change of clothing, much less luxuries in the shape of clean linen and shaving-water, and are as merry as crickets with the prospect of another two days’ hard work and roughing it before them. They are not a bit like regulars, inasmuch as they have no stamp on them of the stunted factory hand, or of the half-starved farm-labourer, or of the town gaol-bird. They are fine young Englishmen, public-school men and university men many of them, broad in the shoulder, clear of eye, firm and active of gait; men trained on the river and the cricket and football field to hardiness and strength. Just the men for efficient light infantry. They have been out since nine o’clock this morning, in heavy marching order, helmets, greatcoats rolled over the left shoulder, water-bottles, havresacks, rifles, bayonets, and twenty rounds of blank cartridge in their pouches; scouring the country round, up to their knees in mud, beaten by cold wind and driving rain, in pursuit

of an imaginary foe. And they have just tramped with a swinging step into camp to the soul-stirring strains of 'Georgia.' As it is one o'clock they are ready for their midday meal, of which we have been invited to partake by a hospitable sergeant whom we know to be a rising exhibitor at the Royal Academy. The cooks—none of your professional army men, but members of the corps—have been slaving for two hours past, carrying piles of brushwood, damming up leaky cooking trenches, inducing damp fuel to burn, cutting up sides of beef, and preparing vegetables; and as the men march in, a savoury scent salutes their nostrils. 'Battalion, halt! Front! Right-turn! Dismiss!' There is a stampede of gray coats to the tents; impedimenta are quickly cast off; and as the rain has stopped for a few minutes, and a ray of sunshine drops through the banks of heavy clouds, arms are piled outside the tents, tent-doors are opened wide, and preparations made for dinner.

Then comes a sharp ringing bugle note, and the shout for 'Tent orderlies!' echoes from one end of the camp to the other. From each tent run out the men told off for the day's dirty work, range themselves in line, and are marched off to the kitchen trenches. Here each man receives a can of meat-soup and three huge loaves of bread, the rations for his tent, armed with which he returns to where his comrades have already improvised a table-cloth on the ground with a waterproof sheet, and seats with buckets or greatcoats folded up. Then away again to the canteen for beer, and the orderlies may sit down to their well-earned repast with the rest.

The repast, considering the circumstances under which it is cooked and served up, is very fair;

and if there is a little too much fat, or too little lean, or too much 'leather' about the meat, young men with vigorous appetites, whetted by vigorous exertion, are not likely to consider it as a *casus belli* with the cook. At any rate, what knives and forks there are move with considerable rapidity; cups and mugs seem never to be standing idle; and even conversation flags, so ardent is the attack upon the victuals. About half-way through the meal the officer of the day, accompanied by the orderly sergeant, visits every mess to hear complaints, and to see that the men have everything. But there are no complaints to-day, as the sergeant of our tent says, with his mouth choke-full of meat, bread, and potatoes; and the men are happy with the regulation rations, supplemented by little dainties from the canteen. Then a few beatific moments for tobacco consumption, and preparation must be made for the afternoon parade by a general cleaning of arms and furbishing up of accoutrements.

There are some Englishmen who are blessed with a capacity of taking in meals under any circumstances. Nothing seems to unhinge them but unpunctuality and indifferent cooking, which they look for at all times and places, and indulge in a national grumble should they not be gratified in these particular whims. More especially does this apply to Britons at sea who are never sick, and therefore hector it pretty considerably over their less fortunate fellow-passengers, to whom a voyage by steamer is tantamount to the greatest possible physical suffering. This may be noted on board the Antwerp boats and the Dublin packets; but to estimate more accurately the proportion of sailors to non-sailors, let us trans-

plant ourselves further abroad, and imagine ourselves to be on board a China steamer homeward bound, and tossing, say, between Hong-Kong and Singapore.

The clouds have been gathering, and the sea has been behaving itself in an exceedingly eccentric manner all the morning; little ominous signs tell the old sailors amongst our passengers that something out of the ordinary is to be expected—signs which would escape the notice of the 'griffin' or inexperienced traveller, such as the taking in of the deck-awnings; the reefing of every sail; the presence on the bridge, not only of the officer of the watch, but of the skipper and first officer; the putting on of mackintoshes and overalls by the crew; and the securing of cattle- and poultry-pens by stout lashings; not to mention that nasty indescribable touch about the wind which invariably presages bad weather. At half-past five the dinner-gong sounds. There have not been so much 'bull-board' and laughter and flirting to-day as usual; and there certainly is not the customary alacrity, not to say eagerness, consequent upon the sound of the dinner-gong. In fact, to-day we are but a dozen at the saloon-table; in fine weather we muster as many as sixty. Things appear bad at sea as we descend the companion and take a last look round, and the vessel rolls and pitches in a manner very little calculated to promote the comfort of the coming meal. We begin under a sort of cloud; conversation carried on in an undertone; laughter grim and forced; the inquisitive man, who is always bothering the skipper with questions about our progress and the time of arrival, and who notes everything in a big diary, has no skipper to talk to; the humorous Irish officer going home

on furlough is quiet and subdued; the effervescing young ladies, on their way from being very great dames at a small China port to being nobodies in big London, are groaning in their cabins; the tables are fitted with 'fiddles;' and the sole representative of the ship's executive is the doctor.

'I suppose there ain't such things as regular storms out here?' hints a gentleman, with a very eager eye for an answer.

'Sometimes we get them rather hot,' replies the doctor.

'But not at this time of the year?' hopefully and confidently continues the gentleman.

'O yes, we're never free from them in the China seas,' reassuringly states the doctor.

'But,' chimes in another passenger, 'we shouldn't feel anything in a big ship like this?'

'Well,' replies the man of medicine, 'I've known bigger ships than this—'

Here a tremendous crash, as if the vessel were being taken up like an eggshell and crumpled in a giant hand, breaks the conversation. Every man's knife and fork drop as from the influence of a galvanic shock; a steward, with a large dish of curry, loses his balance, shoots over the saloon like a cricket-ball, and disappears into a cabin; cries and shrieks, unparliamentary expressions of all sorts, issue from the berths; glasses rattle; hat-boxes and trunks slide and bump in all directions; and by one touch of the Storm Fiend's wand our peaceful little world is turned to Pandemonium. Then comes a comparative lull, and the miserable remainder of the feasters proceed with the remnants of the banquet. Hot sickening dish follows hot sickening dish—fat boiled joints, fowls smothered in butter—and with marvellous ingenuity there seems to be heaped into the *menu*

everything calculated the most to disgust us and turn us against our meal. At intervals there are big lurches, when one side of the table looks down upon the other as from a giddy height, when glasses suspended in racks seem to stand out at right angles, and when mouthfuls have to be watched, dodged, and waited for; not to speak of all sorts of minor convulsions and concussions which come at odd unexpected moments, and create more ill-temper and mischief than the big lurches. Our party is sadly reduced by desertions, and consists of the doctor, the second officer, four hardened travellers, and a sturdy old Yorkshire lady, who retires from and returns to the table at intervals, much to the mingled admiration and disgust of the others. Staggering stewards at length sweep away the plates and dishes, and place our bottles of wine securely between the 'fiddles;' we, clinging like monkeys to the seats and table, endeavour to make ourselves as jovial as circumstances will permit. We shut our ears to the groans, lamentations, and divers more suggestive sounds; and the doctor, a shrewd witty Aberdonian, commences one of his choicest yarns; we balance our glasses as best we can, when a mighty shock, greater than any we have experienced hitherto, seems to turn the huge vessel upside down. Away spin plates, bottles, and glasses, and we are all jerked bodily out of our seats, and rolled away in a confused struggling mass of heads, arms, and legs the whole length of the saloon. A sound of rushing water fires still further our imaginations: we are convinced that everything is over with us this time; but somehow or other manage to pull ourselves together, and discover that after all we are not doomed to a watery

grave. Then the storm seems to moderate, and we have pluck enough to put our noses out above the hatchway. An officer, wrapped to the eyes in mackintoshes, stumbles along the deck, points to the ruin and desolation on deck, and informs us that it has been 'touch and go' with us for the last hour, and that we have weathered a very bad specimen of a typhoon in the China Seas. We have met each other at intervals since, and invariably agree that our dinner on board the stout old P. and O. steamer was one of the most disagreeable within any of our recollections.

I had heard and read that there were yet places in London where one could get a good old-fashioned meal, amidst good old-fashioned surroundings, at a good old-fashioned price. As I am fond of digging and delving after remains of old London, painfully aware of the fact that day by day the old edifice is being swept away in the advance of modern civilisation and improvement, one day I dived down an old dusky court off Fleet-street, with the object in view of realising my dreams. So far back from the street, that the roar of the great seething world was muffled to a gentle hum, stood my tavern. Very dark, very dingy, was the old place; yet the stamp of a faded superiority, of a consciousness of having once played by no means an unimportant part in the social life of the day, still clung to it. Once it had been as well known a place as the Holborn or Criterion of to-day, and it was with pleasure that my eyes wandered from the big carved wooden doorway to the row of deep recessed windows, through the cavernous bar into a long dim coffee-room, all of the well-known and much imitated Queen Anne type. I descended to the bar—

descent into a house is a very respectable stamp of antiquity—an odd little corner, fitted with a metal counter, a sliding window, and shelves decked with fat little barrels, huge china bowls, and piles of glittering glass—to the coffee-room. And here, cheek by jowl with the every-day life of modern London, I was in the presence of the past, and seemed to lose all idea that I was in any other world than that of wigs and swords, laced coats, patches, furbelows, and high-heeled shoes.

I ensconced myself in one of the high-backed dens, and gazed out on to a garden belonging to one of the smallest Inns of Court, until it should please a venerable waiter, who was polishing glasses behind a screen in the corner, to attend to my wants. When he had completed his task to his satisfaction, he paddled up to me. 'A nice little dinner, sir. Yes, sir. A little bit of fish, a couple of lamb chops, a spring chicken, and a gooseberry tart. Yes, sir; in ten minutes, sir. What wine would you like, sir?' All this with deliberation; no scurry and hurry, no panting and whisking of crumbs, as if in for an athletic competition. And I made a very excellent dinner, washed down by a very good bottle of Saint Estéphe, and all at a very moderate rate. The fish was fresh, and boiled perfectly; the chops were of lamb, and not of old mutton; the chicken was not all legs and carcass; the vegetables were unexceptionable. And what did I pay for all this substantiality and excellence? Will the modern diner-out and consequent grumbler at indifferent fare and high prices believe me if I tell him that the 'dem'd total' amounted to four shillings and sixpence? Then I sat and watched the guests who came in. Mostly ancient lawyers;

here and there an old-fashioned traveller, who has walked from one of the metropolitan stations, and is making believe that he has just alighted from the 'Comet' or 'Defiance,' as he hurls his pile of rugs into a corner, rubs his hands, and shouts 'Waiter!' in stentorian tones. There is none of the gas and confusion and Babel of the modern chop-house about the old place; the footsteps are muffled in the deepest of carpets, and the voices seem to be swallowed up in the old stuffy air of the dark old-fashioned room. The house is pulled down, and with it has been severed one of the last links which bind modern to old London.

And as we may dine in the heart of our great city in the old-fashioned way, so may we find here and there, within an easy railway journey of the metropolis, relics of old English rustic inn life, spared from the general ruin brought about by the introduction of railways. We must get well beyond bricks and mortar, however, and keep our eyes well open, so as to discriminate between the genuine article and the mushroom substitute which panders to prevailing popular taste by assuming what it has not.

We heard, some months back, that a railway company was about to invade one of our pet Kentish solitudes; so we resolved to walk out and taste old pleasures ere they should be banished for ever out of our reach.

It was dusk ere the last turn of the road brought us within sight of the object of our pilgrimage, and we were glad to see that, at any rate, the advance of the destroyer had not taken an active shape as yet, but was limited to the delineation, by means of tall posts, of the path he meant to take when he did come.

'Let's have a dinner of the old

sort,' said we to our host, one John Bennenden, a mighty cricketer and no small talker.

'In the old room, sir, and in the old style? Yes, sir.'

Meanwhile we had a look round the place. The Strawberry had been an inn of some repute, for it stood in the main Dover-road, and was a changing place for the coach-teams. Huge ranges of stabling and outhouses still attested departed grandeur, and we were saddened to see that the old black walls were covered with announcements of the railway extension. About the house itself there was little for the artist to note save that it was a fine specimen of the rambling, many-cornered, many-chimneyed, quaintly-roofed English country hostelry. In front stood a huge oak-tree, from which hung a representation of a huge strawberry, outrageously plump as to shape, and unnaturally red as to colour, but for all that looked upon by the natives as a marvel of art; and under the tree were tables and seats in the old style, at which, in an age when there were village philosophers and gossips, lively and loud political discussions would be held. 'Our room,' as we called it, looked pleasantly out on to a broad lawn surrounded by a thick trimly-kept hedge, over which we could feast our eyes upon as beautiful a stretch of hill, dale, and wood as there is in England. The windows of 'our room' opened straight on to the grass, whereon were Chinese cane chairs for the enjoyment of after-dinner cigars and talk; and it was not without a feeling of real regret that we looked out at the well-known scene and realised that it was to be for the last time. Our little sentimental pause was broken by the entrance of John Bennenden with the dinner.

Smile not, reader, nor complain that you have been lured on to greater expectations, when you learn that this dinner consisted of ham and eggs, cherries and cream, and good Kent ale. Ham and eggs we had always had when we arrived here hungry upon our walking expeditions, and ham and eggs we resolved to have at this our farewell banquet. But such ham and such eggs! None of your nasty little shrivelled-up pieces of leather, with a tangled yellow-and-white mass dotted here and there, steeped in greasy liquor, such as form the orthodox 'am and heggs' of the British roadside inn; but a huge dish filled with the most deliciously-scented ham, whereon reposed a half-dozen of large, plump, fresh eggs; this, eaten with home-made bread, and washed down by the home-brewed, was a banquet for a monarch. Then the large 'white-hearts,' freshly plucked from the orchard beyond the hedge, and the thick pure clotted cream! We seemed to forget our sadness amidst the excellence of our fare and the joviality of our conversation; but it came back with redoubled force when we sat out in the long chairs and watched the smoke from our pipes ascend to the clear evening sky as we had so often done before. It was a wrench, this parting with our old inn, and we had not much joviality left in us when, an hour or two afterwards, we pledged old John in his favourite 'yard' glass, which, said he, had been in the house since the Restoration. And we never saw the place under its old guise again. The railway came, the village grew into an opulent suburb, the Strawberry, although retaining the old name, was converted into a glittering gin-palace, the oak-tree was cut down, and we actually knew the

place no more. But the beautiful Kentish view remains, and we often talk of the old Strawberry and our last dinner there.

By no means so luxurious even as this humble ham-and-egg dinner was one Christmas banquet at which I 'assisted' during the memorable siege of Paris in the year 1870. There were three of us—young Englishmen—students by profession, observers of men, life, and manners by actual occupation, who, until the time of war, rented three humble rooms very high up a very high house in the Rue des Saints Pères. We led a reckless happy-go-lucky sort of a life so long as our funds permitted us; and when circumstances compelled steadiness and retrenchment, betook ourselves with vigour to our 'studies.' When Germany, however, marched to the gates of Paris, our vocation was gone. Not simply that we yielded to the universal effervescence and excitement; but that, had we been minded to continue our student's life, we could not have done so. When we beheld our venerated lecturer on comparative anatomy a lieutenant of Dragoons, our professor of physiology sergeant in a line regiment, and our botanical instructor capering in blue and gold at the head of a dashing company of 'Eclaireurs de la Seine,' we threw away note-book and pen, and offered our services in the Garde Mobile. We saw a little service at Le Bourget, Mont Avron, and the sortie of December 21, and got a pretty name for boyish foolhardiness and impatience; but, as a rule, our arduous duties consisted of swaggering about our favourite restaurants with the crowd of amateur soldiers, half of whom had never heard a *pièce de douze* fired, and the other half could hardly tell the difference

between the foresight and the backsight of a rifle. But men were killed by constant sorties and exposure to the terrible weather; every pair of arms capable of carrying a rifle had to be impressed into the public service, and for every one there were danger, privations, and hard work. Then provisions began to fail, and prices began to rise; we knew that hampers of good things, consigned to us by fond relations in the belief that Paris, the city of fashion and luxury, could make but a feeble resistance to Teuton veterans, were somewhere about outside—perhaps stowed away in some blockaded railway station, or, more probably, in German stomachs; and this aggravated our distress. A turkey fetched one hundred francs, radishes were ten francs the bunch, champagne five francs the glass, eggs one franc each; but plenty of tobacco, eau de vie, and Strasbourg beer consoled us somewhat, and our guard-room at the Porte Maillot was jovial enough under the circumstances.

Christmas-time approached, and there were no signs either that the Germans were going to leave us, or that Trochu would hang out the white flag. We thought of the preparations for the festal season at home: visions of groaning tables and abundant waste presented themselves to us as we sat over the most meagre of bouillies in the coldest of casemates.

'Never mind,' said Aikin, one of my English friends, 'we'll have something scrumptious for Christmas. I'm not going to let the day go by without some sort of a celebration; I don't know what you fellows are going to do. How much cash can we raise between us?'

We made up about a hundred and fifty francs, and this we determined should be consecrated to

a banquet. Christmas morning came, quite in the 'good old-fashioned' style of the illustrated papers: thermometer twelve degrees below zero; the ground hard as iron and glistening with hard snow.

'The three Englishmen want to be excused guard-mounting to-day, sir,' said the good-natured sergeant of our section to Lieutenant Bouillabaisse.

'What for?' asked the lieutenant. 'Are they ill? They ought to be accustomed to this sort of thing.'

'No, sir, they're not ill; they're better than any of us are. But they want to keep their English festival, and have a dinner. They are very good at drill, and fight like demons; so I do not think you need refuse them.'

'All right,' said the lieutenant.

So we sallied forth, under the guidance of the worthy sergeant, to forage for victuals. At the end of an hour we returned with a brace of rabbits—got as a great bargain for twenty francs—an aged chicken, a pot of condensed milk, some siege-bread, hard and black as rock, and a variegated salad. These delicacies, together with half a dozen rations of rum, some Strasbourg beer, and a keg of eau de vie, we conveyed to the banqueting-hall, a sheltered hut close to the Etat-Major. The smell of the cooking titillated the nostrils of many a poor half-starved Moblot, who wondered how on earth those Englishmen contrived to scrape together a feast unknown in quality even to the gourmets on the staff. If my readers can picture to themselves the face of a weary penniless tramp with a cold joint and a jug of beer set before him, they can form a fair idea of the countenances of us five hungry Moblots when the first course of the

Christmas banquet was served. For fully five minutes not a sound was heard but the clatter of knives and forks, and the crushing of bones between hungry teeth. Gradually, as our stomachs felt easier, our tongues loosened; we laughed and chatted and joked as if there was no such thing as a hungry angry enemy within half a mile of us. Now and then a wistful face peered in; and more than once our laughter was suddenly brought to a standstill by the sullen boom of a shell close by us. We sang out invariably to the owner of the wistful face to enter and have a glass; but to the shells we paid no attention whatever after the first two or three. When nothing remained of the solid viands, the keg of eau de vie was broached as tenderly as if it held gold-dust; and the time-honoured toast of 'The old folks at home' was given and drunk with three ringing cheers, which brought heads out of every hut on the battery, and caused Lieutenant Bouillabaisse to ask if a German gun had been dismounted. Then the sergeant gave us one of Béranger's songs, and we drank 'France and England' with further cheering. And so we carried on our Christmas feast, until one of us proposed that the commandant of the post should be invited to crack a glass with us.

'Do you think he'll condescend to come?' I asked.

'What! old "Alive and Dead" condescend to come where there's a glass of cognac and good company! Try him,' said the sergeant. 'Besides, we're all equal here, and there's no condescension in the matter.'

So we ran over to the Etat-Major.

'Well, my boys, what is it?' asked the veteran, who was re-

clining on his wooden pallet, his martial cloak around him, a German pipe in his mouth, and a volume of Paul de Kock in his hand.

'Please, sir, we've got a Christmas party over in casemate number twelve; will you come and taste our cognac?'

'Ay, that I will,' said the veteran, leaping up at the word 'cognac;' and we sallied forth.

Just as we got well into the open, a large shell sailed majestically down apparently upon our heads. 'Ventre à terre!' was the cry; and as if we had been moved by clockwork we sprawled on to the snow, and watched the great brute descend and burst into a thousand nasty fragments. Then we ran for the casemate.

The old major, who had gained his name 'Alive and Dead' from the charmed life he was said to possess, soon entered into the spirit of our fun, and was foremost in laugh, song, and jest. Not until the keg of cognac was dry did we break up our meeting with 'Auld Lang Syne,' sung in the good old British fashion, arms crossed and feet on the table.

So we kept our Christmas-day. Forty-eight hours later came the great sortie, and poor old 'Alive and Dead' received his quietus from a Bavarian bayonet as he was leading his battalion on to the charge. When we Englishmen meet now, we never fail to talk of our Christmas dinner at casemate number twelve, Porte Maillot, Paris, anno 1870.

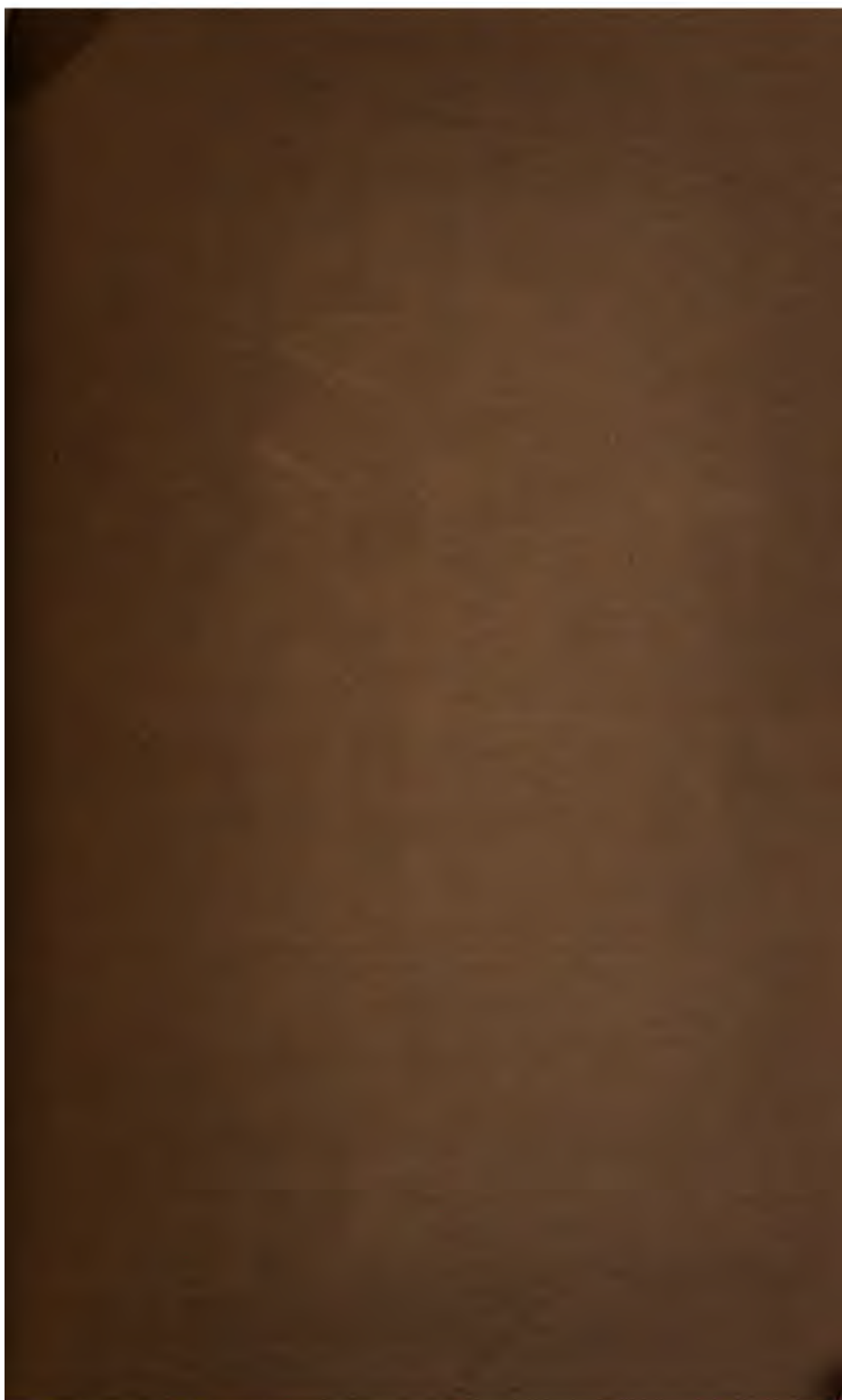
COMING SUMMER.

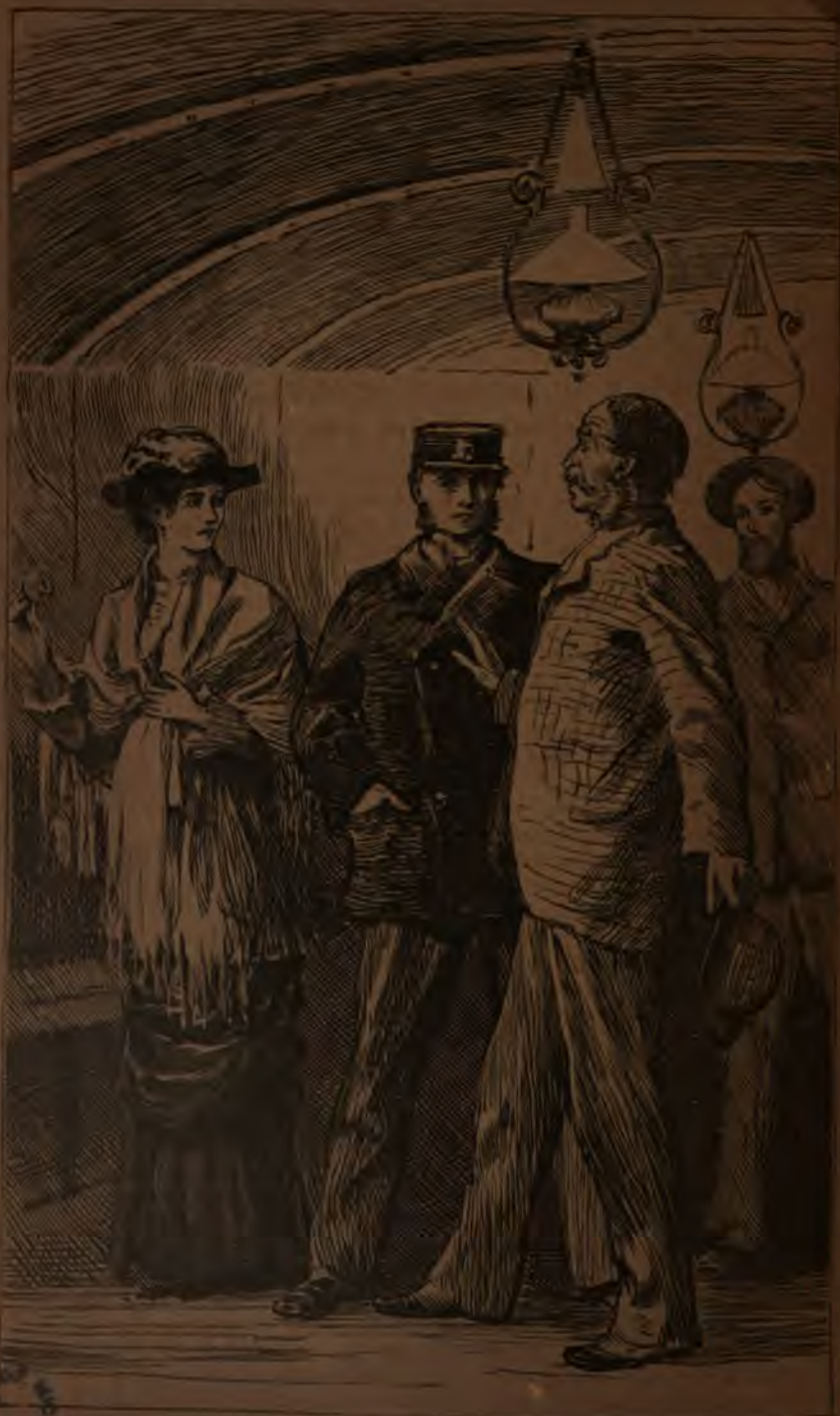
Snowy white upon the hedge-sprays are the blossoms of the thorn,
And the cowslip gilds the meadows, and the May-tide's dewy morn
Is redolent of fragrance from a thousand flower-bells;
Every bird and every blossom of the coming summer tells.

There is perfume from the green lanes, there is music in the breeze,
In the rustling of the tall grass, in the swaying of the trees,
In the cuckoo's jocund calling from the copse that crowns the hill,
In the babbling midst its lilies of yon brooklet's silver rill.

'Soon the roses of the summer will bloom with sunny June!'
The nightingale clear warbles, with his swelling throat a-tune;
As he trills, and jerks, and bubbles, through the moonlit soft May
night,
Whilst his dun mate o'er her nest broods, her black eye glancing
bright

In response to his sweet love-song, and her callow babes are pressed,
With a tender trembling rapture, to her fostering mother-breast;
And through the leafy woodlands reëchoes this refrain
From the minstrel on the hawthorn, 'Summer! summer comes again!'





"I repeat, emphatically and emphatically—and I look at this."

—THE LANCET, 1881.

LONDON SOCIETY.

JUNE 1881.

OUR COLONEL'S STORY;

Or a Slip 'twixt the Cup and the Lip.

'You all knew Sandy McPherson?' said our Colonel.

'Intimately!' 'Perfectly!' 'As well as my own brother, sir!' most of us replied, though, if the truth be told, there was not a man at that mess-table who had ever heard of Mr. McPherson before. You see, it was the commanding officer who spoke, and it was always risky saying him nay when he expected yea.

'They used to call him, you recollect, "The Great Unwashed," a vulgar but appropriate *sobriquet*, nevertheless,' continued the chief. 'Great, on account of his burly and preciously ugly person; unwashed, by reason of his accredited scant acquaintance with brown windsor, spring-water, and the functions of the *dhirzees* and *dhobies*, i.e. tailors and washer-men of the land.

'On his coffee estate in the mountains, and among his undressed and unscrubbed coolies, this disregard for the comforts and conveniences of life went for nothing, perhaps it was even in keeping with the surroundings; but when he came down to this city, walked in its public gardens and esplanade, or showed with its swells at the band, his appearance was something too outrageous, and his brother K.C.B.s, meaning

Knights of the Coffee Berry, and not, as you might suppose, of the Order of the Bath, dressy men hereabouts, whatever else they are on their plantations, cast him completely into the shade by their get-up and gorgousness.

'As for the spinsters and young widows of the station, by "Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, virorum," as Colonel Damas in the play puts it, there was scarce one but who fought shy of admitting him into her presence as a morning visitor, much less as a suitor, though many of these blooming ladies were on the sharp look-out for the silken chains of matrimony, and Barkis—that is to say, McPherson—was, as they knew, willing.

'But, disadvantages of person and attire notwithstanding, he was a right good fellow, this same gentleman. He was honest, hard-working, thrifty, simple-minded; and from being a mere adventurer without interest, friends, or money, he had, self-helped only, saved up the bawbees little by little; had bought patch after patch, acre after acre, of virgin land; cut down its timber, cleared it, planted it; and now he had squatted down free from encumbrances on Milesa Craig as he called his property, as pretty and as fruitful a small coffee estate

as could be found in one of the most picturesque districts of this lovely island.

'I wish that I could give you even a faint idea of the exquisite beauty of its scenery, as it stood on a range of lofty hills looking out on still higher mountains, clothed to their very summits with hoary forest-trees. I wish I could paint that mighty waterfall, almost beside the house, as it came rushing and tearing over beds and boulders of rock, tumbling with an incessant roar into a foaming river below. I would I were able to picture the slopes green with scented grass, the fields white at one season with the snowy blossoms, and at another red with the ripening fruit of the coffee-bushes, the towering crags glowing with bright tropical flowers, and the steep declivities verdant to their very bases with ferns and lichens. I can't do it, boys, and I won't try. All that I want to let you know is, that it was a deuced nice sort of a place, this habitat of the McPherson; and that to be settled there with one's household gods, and coffee selling at seventy or eighty shillings per hundredweight in the market, would pay a precious deal better than does her most gracious Majesty—God bless her!—and the command of this dear old corps with its unruly subs.

'So, no doubt, too, thought its owner as he lolled and smoked at his cottage-front and gazed at the silver bloom, or the ruddy cherries of his trees growing almost up to the very door. But it was a poor, ungarnished, comfortable, higgledy-piggledy sort of a homestead that same dwelling-house; for, whatever else friend Sandy had done towards the beautifying and fertilising of his land, his roof-tree, like his wardrobe, had been utterly neglected.

Both wanted just exactly what he thought they did—the wife element to set them ship-shape and presentable; and, as you have heard before, for that desideratum he was on the *qui-vive*.

'Now you young gentlemen who are in the habit of lawn-tennising, afternoon teeing, talking, spooning, walking, driving, with all the feminines, plain and coloured, of this place, and who think that you have only to ask and be received,—which I beg and entreat you will not put to the test, cutting up the mess and so on—can't perhaps realise to yourselves the difficulties the worthy I am speaking of had met with in even this overstocked matrimonial emporium. The Angelfalls, the Hunters, the Hookers, lots of girls whom I will not name, had snubbed or turned up their pretty noses at him when he came a-wooing; and so, *volens volens*, he remained a bachelor, anathematising his ill-luck, and venting his disappointments upon the backs of shirking and recusant Tamil coolies, the recognised natural enemies of coffee and the scape-goats of its cultivators.

'Then as a last resource he sought, from his brethren of the berry around, counsel as to the most advisable method of getting the so-needed helpmate; and the first man he consulted was Herr Thaler, a successful and rich German whose estate bordered on Ailsa Craig.

"So, so!" said that personage. "Zere is noting more easy. Zave off zat ragget beard, burn in ze fire zose old clodes not fit for 'Oundsitch or any Juden Strasse, buy von big tob, mein frend, get zome Europe-muster coats, and zen return to ze fräuleins and vidder-fraus vid ze moniah-bags in ze 'ands. If zey vill not 'ave zou,

say vill take ze rupee; trost 'em for zat, my zon."

'But the recommendation was unpalatable, and to a great extent impracticable, so another *fidus Achates* was appealed to, one Jack le Geste, a man much addicted to chaff and practical joking.

"In this land of pearls and precious stones, no go, dear boy," said Mr. le G. "From Dondra Head to Point Calamere—north, south, east, west—the women won't look at you; that you have found out long ago. Give up hunting, then, in these oft-trod colonial fields, and draw the home covers. Don't you happen to know any bonny lassie in your own 'Caledonia stern and wild,' or a pretty colleen in the oisale of shillelahs and shamrocks, who would be glad to share curry and rice with you? Go and try those parts; if not, have a haphazard shy at where I hail from, the Channel Islands. Spins—ay, and precious good-looking ones too—are as plentiful there as cocoa-nuts are here, and maybe one of them might be induced to clear out in your favour. Failing those islets, I know of no other dodge than indenting upon one of those co-operative associations which furnish everything, even to a better-half. But mind, old man, they keep a roster for foreign service in their offices: first lady on the list, plain or pretty, first for duty; you pays your money, but you don't take your choice."

'But these suggestions also were considered infeasible, and put aside. Presently, however, a thought struck McPherson.

"Le Geste," said he, "when I was a boy there lived in the neighbourhood of my father's manse a widowed lady with two or three then wee, very wee, daughters. From what I can

recollect of them their means were cramped, not to say scanty, but they were of good blood and form. One of the children, the eldest if my memory serves me, was called Effie—Effie Needum, and promised to be bonny, for I can faintly recall her blue eyes, flaxen hair, rosy complexion, and jimp little figure. If she be alive she must be close on thirty; for it is many years since I came out here a stripling, and was Chinna Doray [*Anglicè*, little master] on the Paycock estate, as my kind employer styled that property. Mrs. Needum knew me well—better, indeed, than I knew her. I wonder if she and the bairns be in the land of the leal or the living."

"Write indirectly and inquire."

'And Sandy did so, and ascertained that his old acquaintances, Miss Effie included, were still alive, and proudly bearing up against the *res angusta domi*. Armed with which intelligence he once again returned to Le Geste.

"It is all right now, Mac," said he; "your course is as clear as day. Send a 'chit' to mater-familias N.; tell her that you are well-to-do in the world, own lands and cattle, men-servants and maid-servants; that you want to settle; that as a whipper-snapper you liked—no, better say loved—Miss Effie, and ask her in plain English to come out and marry you. Above all things, though, be sure and send your photograph; you are not such a very, very bad-looking chap, Sandy, if you would only dress like a Christian, and not like a coolie."

'So the letter was written, submitted to Le Geste's inspection, sealing, posting, and in due course was received by the Needums, in whose little household it created no small amount of astonishment,

and was much spelt and pondered over, especially by the damsel most concerned—still a comely if even a somewhat *passé* body—and who, after a while, consented to go out and wed her suitor.

"After all, mother dear," she said, "he has house and home for me; maybe, by and by, for you too, Jennie; and I'll do all I can to help you. It's the best thing for me. And really Mr. McPherson—or I suppose I ought to call him Alexander—is yet young and not bad-looking. Quite the contrary—very, very nice-looking; see the photo he has sent us."

"And Miss Jennie quite agreed with her elder sister that Mr. McPherson was a beauty.

"Well, my bairns," said the old lady, "I can't gainsay you but that the portrait is winsome and dounce enough; but as I call to mind the boy Sandy, the son of the minister, he was not nearly so seemly and well favoured. But it is, indeed, lang syne since I set eyes on him, and likely he has got handsomer as he got older; some men do."

"Then everything being settled, Miss Needum accepted her kismet, agreed to go out, and her lover—open-handed, honourable, true, as I have already told you he was—sent the wherewithal for passage and outfit.

"And pending the many, many weeks that elapsed, and while the good ship *Queen of Serendib* was sailing round the Cape for her destination, a change, a radical change, came over the life and habits of our bride-expecting friend. He cast into the limbo of things done with his coarse "cumlies," rough "dungarees," and other country clothing, and burst out into "Europe-muster" linen, tweeds, and serges. He purchased largely house furniture and nicknacks; he bought a

lady's horse and a Peat's side-saddle; he whose equine proclivities had never extended beyond a shaggy mountain pony, and a tattered and torn pigskin. He told his old flames and chums that he was going in for the Benedict, and bashfully listened to the "riles" and jeers of the one, and the chaff and laugh of the other.

"But, barring "The Great Unwashed" himself, no one was more taken aback at the course of events than Tamby, his long-serving "appoo" or butler. That functionary saw coolie after coolie arrive at Ailsa Craig with load upon load of unknown and unusual goods; and although in the "Lines," and other native resorts, he might have expressed his bewilderment, yet in his master's presence he reserved a stolid silence. But when one day a string of "bandies" (carts) drew up, and from beneath their leaf-covered tilts there were dragged out mats and carpets, sofas, chairs, tables, what not, then his apparent indifference and his "nigger" tongue could hold out no longer.

"Why master kick up all dis bobberee? What for he want all dese tings on wattie (estate)?" he inquired.

"A young lady is now on her way from Scotland to marry me, Tamby."

"Marry! Doray (master) going take wife after all dis plenty long time do too well widout?"

"Yes!"

"Den, master, please, I discharge you, sar. No my custom stop wid lady in bungalow. Master's missis come, master's appoo go. Master take choice."

"As the time for the arrival of the *Queen of Serendib* drew nigh, awful were the fidgets of our hero; and many days before it was possible for that slow and sure craft to reach her port, he

was there walking about with a big binocular in his hands, looking out seawards, and entreating all sorts and conditions of men for the very earliest news of her being sighted. The fact was that the rough seasoned old fellow was on the very tenterhooks of anxiety and expectation, as nervous as a schoolgirl, and behaving himself as such.

"Then at long last it was told him that the vessel was in the offing, was rounding the point, was at anchor in the harbour; and in the Master Attendant's boat, cushioned, flagged, and bedecked for the auspicious occasion, Sandy McPherson, Esquire, of Ailsa Craig, planter, rowed alongside "samelike he Governor," the native spectators observed.

"Scrambling up the side, he took a hasty glance at the many passengers assembled on the poop; and, instinctively guessing that Miss Effie was not among them, he dived below, and confronted the stewardess.

"Miss Needum on board, and well?" asked he.

"Yes, sir," replied the matron; "and a very nice, good, kind, pleasant young lady she is, and I've taken the greatest care of her." She felt sure that the gent was Miss N.'s husband to be, and that there was money in his purse for a gratuity, notwithstanding that, according to the terms of the passage—money, stewards' and stewardesses' fees were included; a fiction, gentlemen, a pleasant fiction, which you will find out when you go down to the sea in ships.

"Take this card to her," said the pale and trembling gentleman. "I'll wait her coming up in that far corner of this saloon."

"Glancing at the pasteboard, the woman disappeared; and presently there ascended, step by

step, from the regions below, first a neat straw hat, trimmed with bright ribbons, beneath that hat a face somewhat worn with years and cares, but still fresh and comely enough; then a slight compact figure, draped in plain well-fitting garments, shawled, and ready for the shore. Miss Effie, *in propria persona*, stood before her hand-seeker, blushing "celestial rosy red."

"He advanced from his coign of vantage to greet her; but as he drew nigher, instead of the warm affectionate welcome he looked for, there was a fixed stare, a shudder, a hasty retreat, and a loud scream which resounded from stern to stem of the big ship, and brought every one from decks and cabins into the saloon.

"Miss Needum—Effie, my dear girl, what on earth is the matter?" hurriedly stammered out the astounded Sandy.

"Shiver my timbers, what ails the lassie?" put in the captain. "Look out for squalls, if you've annoyed her!" And all the bystanders echoed the words in more or less threatening terms. She was evidently a favourite on board.

"O, take him away," cried the lady piteously,— "take him away from me some one! I don't know him! I've been misled, deceived! I can't marry him—indeed, indeed I can't! He is not Mr. McPherson who wrote to me, to whom I came out to be married—He is so ugly! O, such a dreadful fright! I'll return him his money! I'll work my way back to my poor mother! I'll do anything, but I can't be his wife! I'd rather die first!"

"Miss Needum, I don't indeed understand this," said the taken-aback and completely flabbergasted one. "What does it all mean? Are we not engaged?"

Have you not come out of your own free will to accept the home and the love I offer you? Did I not send you my likeness?"

"No, no!"

"Surely I did. It was taken by Collodion, our best photographer; and when he gave it to me, he said, 'Mr. McPherson, sir, there is no flattery 'ere; your worst enemies would admit that.' Why, I myself put it inside the letter to your mother."

"I repeat, no—decidedly and emphatically no! Look at this," and drawing from her bosom a little locket, she opened it, and displayed the head and face of a younger, much handsomer, and in every outward respect a more lovable man than the scared one now before her. *It was the counterfeit presentment of Mr. Jack le Geste*, and I leave you to imagine what McPherson thought when he saw it there.

"How could it get into the locket, you ask? Why, in the simplest way in the world. That good-for-nothing fellow Le Geste, when Sandy's letter came into his possession, thought to "sell" him, and so had surreptitiously removed his *carte de visite*, substituting one of his own, and Effie had worn it ever since.

"The poor deil of a disappointed bridegroom pleaded hard, and tried every argument to induce the girl to let matters progress, but she was obstinate and determined.

"She would esteem and respect him always, but nothing more. To let the cat out of the bag, Miss Effie had fallen most desperately in love with the picture of her supposed Alexander, and in vulgar language had spooned over it awfully during the tedious and lone hours of a long voyage. Of

course, she imagined that it was her intended husband she was approving, or she would not have done it—certainly not.

"So, quite chap-fallen, and in the maddest of rages, McPherson returned to his estate.

"Arrived there, he cut from one of his coffee-bushes the thickest and knottiest of sticks, and proceeded with it in search of Le Geste; but fortunately for the jester he had made tracks and was gone.

"He sought him that night, and he sought him next day,
And he sought him about, till a week passed away;
In *boutiques*, on "watties," in a lone jungle spot,
McPherson sought fiercely, but found Le Geste not.

Very lucky, I repeat, for the undiscoverable one's bones.

"Then he reverted to his old customs and habits, sold his not now necessary goods and chattels, and thought as little as he could of the false Effie.

"A fickle and capricious creature, woman. Listen, gentlemen, to another exemplification of old Virgil's dictum.

"In the same ship in which, shortly after the breaking off of her intended espousal, Miss Needum sailed for England, there came on board, almost at the last minute, a slim, dark-haired, good-looking man, going home, some said for health; others, in fear and trembling of an irate Gael with a huge stick in his hands. Be this as it may, the health-seeker or the fugitive—take which you please—was no other than Le Geste; and to close my story, when the vessel touched at St. Helena for water and provisions, he and Effie went on shore and returned man and wife."

ON READING BETWEEN THE LINES.

I was once much amused, on taking up a book of travels and experiences, on observing a satiric note addressed to the printer: 'These lines are to be spaced out widely, as there is much to be read between them.' Now there is certainly a happy art, never more needed than in these modern days, of 'reading between the lines.' There is an old proverb which says that we should believe nothing that we hear, and only half that we see. The ages of faith are over, in which 'that we saw it in print' was sufficient to assure conviction. Without actually going so far as to disbelieve what we read in print or manuscript, it is nevertheless true that something remains to be read over and above what we find in the manuscript or print. We may call it a gloss, or a marginal reading, or an interpretation; but, however it may be described, the process is assuredly that of 'reading between the lines.' Even in public writing how much there is of private reading! If you are reading a leading article, or a debate in Parliament, or even the report of a law-case, you may often detect the bias. The intention is to write up or to write down. Even City articles are not immaculate. Even friendly correspondence has its special aim. That is a very good direction to 'space out the lines widely, as there is much to be read between them.'

I remember once being very much struck by a literal instance of 'reading between the lines.' I was visiting a great scholar, one

whose name is deservedly high throughout the learned world. I found him after breakfast poring diligently over an ancient manuscript. Those strong glasses and those faded characters must indeed be trying to the eyesight. 'This,' said the great authority on ancient manuscripts, 'is a palimpsest.' He was literally 'reading between the lines.' It was the usual kind of thing. There had been some old skin covered with writing; and more parchment being required for further writing, this parchment had been washed and prepared for the use of another scribe. The former writing had not been obliterated; but the characters were faded and could only with great difficulty be deciphered. In order that he might write the more easily, the copyist had avoided the former traces of manuscript; and thus the ancient manuscript was legible 'between the lines.' It has frequently happened that in the scriptorium of the ancient monastery the monk has written down some wild worthless legend, such as we may read by the hundred in the *Acta Sanctorum*; and, to save expense and pains, has sacrificed some priceless text of Virgil or Cicero. To the best of my memory, in the case I am mentioning, it was a cursive manuscript of some portion of the New Testament, which itself might have been a copy of those big earliest manuscripts of old which were called the Uncial mss. Thus, through the simple process of literally reading 'between the lines,' one of the most valuable manuscripts in

the world may have been discovered. One of our poets has an interesting conceit of human life itself being a palimpsest. There is many a writing on our lives that memory can only faintly recall, and yet which is written as if with a pen of adamant and a point of diamond. Sometimes between the familiar lines of to-day we can discover tracings of the writings of far-off times, traces of thoughts and words and deeds which are forgotten, save for these sudden shocks of memory, but which have coloured and shaped the course of our lives.

It is curious to note how *Mesieurs* the Novelists have introduced writing between the lines as a trick of their craft. I am one of those who think that *Monte Cristo* is a most delicious book, showing, as no other novelist had hitherto done, the poetry and privileges of wealth. Being at Marseilles the other day, I was much interested in seeing the *allée* in which Mercedes lived, and the *café* in which Edouard Danton was arrested. A friend once took me by the arm, in a most enthusiastic manner, down a certain street. 'In that street,' he exclaimed, 'Mr. Micawber used to dwell.' Imaginary personages are often more powerful than real personages. M. Dumas very neatly works in an incident of reading between the lines. The old abbé in the *Château d'If* relates how he found out the secret of the treasure buried in the island by rescuing the remains of a burned paper. He cunningly reads between the lines and is enabled to give an approximation to the actual writing. Mr. Wilkie Collins in the *Moonstone* makes a medical man take down some muttered ravings, from which, by a process analogous to reading between the lines, he constructs a coherent

whole. In a puzzle story such a trick is very useful.

Novelists do not disdain gathering up hints and tricks from one another. But I have known the same sort of thing happen on a small scale in domestic life. There was a very domestic lady—which means, as some one has shrewdly said, a lady who is very much like a domestic—who found that certain family secrets of her household had become the common property of her servants. It appeared that she had utilised some portions of her correspondence by turning them into 'spills' for the mantel-piece; and a cunning servant had pieced them together and contrived to 'read between the lines,' and so mastered some family matters concerning which her master and mistress had good reason to be reserved. So much for the prosaic literal practice of 'reading between the lines.'

In the matter of testimonials it is always as well to read between the lines. The testimonial is valuable not so much for what it says as for what it does *not* say. This is the case through the whole gamut of testimonials, from the gorgeous epergnes presented to one another by the members of some Mutual Admiration Society to the characters given to domestic servants. Once a celebrated man told me that he had been asked to give a testimonial to a gentleman whom we will call Mr. Anscombe, who was a candidate for a professorship in a colonial university. 'I only met Mr. Anscombe once in my life,' said our friend, 'and on that occasion he was in a state of beastly intoxication.' I hastened to observe that under such circumstances he could hardly be expected to give a testimonial. 'O yes, I did,' said the great man. 'I managed to put something together that would

serve his turn.' I presume that a character for sobriety would hardly be among the good points enumerated; but then, to be sure, that would be a matter that would hardly be looked for as requiring mention in the application of a man of learning for a learned professorship. And yet various sad instances might be given of very learned men being overcome by some very brutal vice. One might almost give a separate paper to this subject of testimonials. Occasionally they serve other purposes besides those of giving a character. The late Archdeacon Sinclair told the writer that when Sir William Hamilton was a candidate for a chair in the University of Edinburgh, in the gift of the Lord Provost and Baillie, Sir William came to the archdeacon in a state of great tribulation, and wished him to write a testimonial which he might lay before the civic patrons. 'They don't know anything about my writings, and have rather got the idea that I am an atheist.' The archdeacon wrote a very careful letter to the corporation, in which he cautiously explained to their collective wisdom that, so far from Sir William Hamilton's writings being atheistical, they had a precisely contrary tendency. Sir William won the chair, and I believe that Mr. Sinclair always considered that he had a very great hand in his getting it.

In this matter of the giving of characters there is generally a good deal of reading between the lines. In giving a character it is well to weigh and scrutinise every expression you use, as certainly your correspondent will not fail to weigh and scrutinise your expressions. There has been a great deal of unpleasant litigation in this matter of the giving of characters. If you give a character which the

servant considers unjust, the servant may bring an action; and if you give a character which the master considers unfair, I believe that the master may bring an action. Certainly when a bank has been induced to give credit to a customer on account of unduly strong recommendations, it has sought and obtained a remedy against the recommender. In reading a servant's character, if there is no mention made of honesty and sobriety, it is very possible that the omission may have been designed. It is thought the best policy—and it is certainly the safest, but not the most honest, policy—to maintain a prudent reticence on the point. It is one, however, on which a frank explanation ought to be sought and given. The object of language being, according to Talleyrand, to disguise our thoughts, the art of reading between the lines is the art of penetrating through this disguise. This is not only shown in such a matter as servants' characters, and the whole gamut of testimonialising, but also in the matter of diplomatic correspondence. In Talleyrand or Metternich we have probably to 'read between the lines.' Lord Palmerston confounded the diplomacy of Europe by really saying simply what he meant, a device which served to 'confound their politics,' and 'frustrate their knavish tricks.' If we look carefully through our correspondence we are often able to read between the lines. If, for instance, we get an invitation to dinner only a few hours before the dinner itself, we can hardly help seeing an intimation that our company is not very greatly cared for, and that we are probably asked in order to supply vacant space.

There are more serious occasions in which people scan the lines before them very carefully, in

order to see if there is anything to be read between the lines. For instance, if a man has made an offer to a lady, it becomes an interesting inquiry whether the 'No' by any process of ingenuity could be tortured into a 'Yes.' I know the case of a man who to such a proposal received an answer from the lady to the effect that she was already engaged, but that if such were not the case she could not have said what might have happened. The man read through the lines to some purpose, for he eventually married the lady. Sometimes in analogous cases there are expressions so full of pity and courtesy that the language is keenly scrutinised to see if there is any hope of a warmer feeling. Such scrutiny is often far from being in vain. The poet has told us that there is often only a very narrow space between pitying and embracing. How often, when a young fellow has fallen out with his people at home, he anxiously scrutinises the language of the governor to see if he shows signs of relenting, and perhaps the old folk are doing just the same to see if he is showing signs of repenting! Perhaps the college tutor has written to say that it is his painful duty to inform the parent or guardian of the young one's delinquencies. I confess that whenever a man writes to me about his 'painful duty,' I feel inclined to read between the lines and to construe the expression in the sense of 'savage satisfaction.' 'Great regret' very commonly means 'great glee,' and when a man tells you that he has 'much pleasure' in forwarding you money, he probably does so with groaning and much grinding of teeth. So also in the phrases and courtesies of life, it is constantly necessary to read between the lines. There

are certainly cant phrases in which there is a great deal of affectation and no little insincerity. What a great deal of insincerity there is, for instance, in that expression 'thanks' when people are not at all thankful, and 'vastly' and 'awfully' really mean nothing! You commence your letter 'My dear Sir' to a person whom you detest, and you say to another 'Your obedient Servant' when obedience is the very last idea you have. You read between the lines, and not without a little satire and bitterness. It is the case in electioneering, in Parliament, in the making of books and speeches and reviews, that there is some motive more or less transparent. Macaulay makes the constituent say of the candidate,

'He asked after my wife who was dead,
And my children who never were born.'

I by no means object to the courtesies of life even when they are obviously insincere, for they at least serve the purpose of oiling the wheels of the machine, but at the same time only the blear-eyed can fail to read between the lines.

Similarly in the reading of novels we have constantly to look between the lines. We need scarcely say that this is especially the case in reference to the novels of Lord Beaconsfield. Immediately he had published a political novel, one or more professed keys were at once issued. The best of it was, that each reader was at liberty to construct his own key. Every one was obliged to read *Endymion*, if only in self-defence; for whoever sat by your side at dinner would talk of nothing else, while the interest of the story was yet fresh. The remarkable point was, that no key could be accurate. It was the fashion of Lord Beaconsfield, so soon as he had completed a photograph, to blur it. It would offend against his code, perhaps

also against the code of good manners, to draw a portrait distinctly recognisable. This, however, is done with some completeness when Croker is described as Rigby, and Theodore Hook as Lucius Gay. Almost invariably, however, we have just a few lines before another description is interwoven, perhaps of a distinctly antagonistic kind. Nevertheless, between those few lines it may be possible to read a great deal.

It is remarkable for how many years Lever's novels were ignored by the London press. There was one London newspaper, however, which confessed that, 'amidst all the reckless extravagance, uproarious humour, and brilliant slapdash, they read *between the lines* of *Lorrequer* a power of description, an insight into character, a mine of thought, which one might look for in vain in works of far higher pretension.' Now this is one of the highest powers of criticism—to read between the lines; to detect real genius even amid extravagances. How unfortunate for the fame of Lord Jeffrey that he abused Wordsworth, and of Professor Wilson that he abused Tennyson—mainly from the want of capacity to read between the lines! You take up a poem or a play; critically you see a hundred faults, but there are lines which impress you at once as possessing the stamp of genius. It is the chief gift of a good editor or reviewer to read between the lines, and to discover the genius that is hid from the less critical and appreciative mind.

Even in pictures one may at times read between the lines. In the conventual church of Santa Maria della Concezione at Rome is Guido's magnificent picture of the Archangel Michael trampling on the devil. Now Guido had a great spite against Pope Inno-

cent X., and has drawn the Pope's portrait under the guise of the devil. A delicate stroke of satire is given in one of the pictures of the gentle Fra Angelico. It is a picture of the Last Judgment, and the condemned consist entirely of monks. Thus a skilful attack is made upon the whole hierarchy. There are many pictures the interest of which is greatly heightened when we know the personage in the portrait or the likeness that is introduced into the picture. We all know the picture of Lord Chatham fainting away in the House of Lords; but Lord Macaulay asserts that frequently when Lord Chatham had the gout, it was because he did not choose to face difficult questions in his place in Parliament.

It very often happens in practical matters we have carefully to read between the lines. The lines give us the letters, but we have to look 'between the lines' for the spirit and the intention. When the will of a testator becomes obsolete and impracticable, it frequently becomes the duty of a Court of Equity to read between the lines, and give the nearest effect to his will. For instance, there was a man who left a large sum to insolvent debtors. It is a popular idea that imprisonment for debt is abolished, and those who have the distribution of the fund now apply it to general charitable objects. But if it is sought to read rightly between the lines of the bequest, perhaps the money might be properly devoted to the many poor debtors who are again and again imprisoned by the county-court judges without being in the least degree released from their original liability. Similarly in respect to educational bequests bequeathed ages ago to our colleges and universities. No doubt,

if we read carefully between the lines, it was their intention to promote the objects that would best improve the intellectual and moral interests of the country. And herein lies the strength of the argument for the Endowment of Research. It may be argued that in our times the great business of life is not so much Greek and Latin, whatever may have been the case in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as the investigation of the phenomena of Nature, of that knowledge which is only hidden in order that men by searching may find it out. It may be argued that if we read between the lines of the great men who made the bequests, that they never intended men in the prime of life to lead an indulgent existence upon fellowships, but that they might be put in a position in which they could attain to the most profitable knowledge of their time. The Statute of Mortmain in some degree controls the domination of the dead hand; but if statesmen would read carefully between the lines, as they increasingly try to do, there would be little difficulty in reconciling the aims of legislators with the intentions of benefactors.

How often in human history and human character it becomes necessary for us to read between the lines! As one's experience of life enlarges, one sees more and more the perfect wisdom of the rule that tells us not to judge one another. Nothing, in an immense number of cases, is harder to judge than the moral quality of actions. The science of casuistry has been as much laughed away by Pascal as the style of chivalry by Cervantes. For instance, the same act which is mean in one man is generous in another. The average subscription of an English gentleman to any philanthropic or charitable object is precisely

one guinea. Now it is certainly true that there are a large number of people who subscribe their guinea, to whom the guinea is a mere feather's weight which they do not feel in the least. But I do aver that there are many people to whom that guinea is a serious object, and involves a direct sacrifice. It is not without a decided mental struggle that they resolved to persevere with the guinea instead of descending to the half-guinea. The difference may indicate not only the loss of some little luxury, but also the giving up of some necessity. Very often the man who seems to be mean is generous, and the apparently generous man is necessitous. I remember once seeing a circumstance mentioned in the paper, where, it appeared to me, that a great unintentional injustice had been done to very worthy people. A man had won the Derby. He stood champagne on every side to every one who would partake thereof. Not only that, but some one suggested that he should give something heavy to a charity, with which suggestion I believe that he complied. Then the newspaper writer went on to say that you often found in the patron of the turf a liberality which you would not meet in professedly benevolent and Christian circles. Now to this I demur. A man, even of large fortune, who makes beneficence an active duty, cannot do the sudden liberal act of another who has just won ten or twenty thousand on the Derby. Let us suppose the extreme case, which, however, is not so uncommon, that he habitually sets aside one-tenth of his income for pious and charitable uses. Such a man finds at the very beginning of his financial year that his tithe is absolutely mortgaged, that he has given away to the very limit of

his strength, and that he cannot meet any new demand without surrendering some object to which he is mentally pledged, or incurring some further sacrifice which is really beyond his means. Then the unreflecting observer, who has never practised himself in reading between the lines, terms the man who has performed a sudden act of solitary munificence so exceedingly liberal, and condemns the man of unobserved, punctual, persistent goodness as being in comparison illiberal and mean. Happily, the man of quiet unobtrusive charity has never accustomed himself greatly to regard the world's praises or blame. I believe that of all virtues justice is the last and most difficult to be learned, and the habit of reading between the lines is the most valuable auxiliary in moral training.

It is a habit which we are constantly called upon to exercise if we would correct false estimates, and have some sort of understanding of the varieties of human nature and individual character. That man who seems to wear his heart upon his sleeve, who shakes you so heartily by the hand, who is always so friendly and joyous, who gives you the fullest idea of frankness and fairness, may be only playing a part which health and prosperity make easy to him, and which may admirably serve his own purposes of popularity, or social influence, or sordid gain. Should you watch your man narrowly, being gifted with the art of reading through the lines, some awkward fact is sure to crop up, the index of the real character, which, as in the case of the palimpsest, underlies the apparent and more modern characteristics. Again, it is not uncommon for men who are truly liberal to carefully hide their liberality, that they may not be imposed on; and men of the

tenderest nature to adopt harsh forbidding manners to save themselves from being lacerated by the obtuseness or cruelty of others. If you bide your time, such quaint, impressive, hardly discernible writing will emerge, as if from invisible ink, between the conventional lines of the palimpsest. In long midnight talks in college rooms, or in lonely mountain solitudes, I have seen something 'between the lines' as hard as a cuneiform inscription, until the secret of the letters has been thoroughly revealed, and then has come the full flood of confidences and revelations. There are so many unknown things in a human life, which, if only told, might prove an apology, explain curious phenomena, and either enlist sympathy or deepen disgrace. Take the case of a man who leads a life of storm and controversy, who is one of the great combatants of the Senate or the Bar, and who is to be found wherever contention is bitterest and highest. But when once he has crossed the threshold of his home, all is peace; he is in the midst of the roses and evergreens of domestic life; love, sympathy, affiance, wrap him in profound repose, and brace him anew for the strain and conflict of life. But there is another man whose lot is apparently far less arduous, but in reality is far more so. He seems to pass days of ease at home, screened from the vulgar dust and noise of battle; but home may be no home for him. He may be surrounded with cares with which he may not be able to contend, and from which he cannot flee; he may be childless and wifeless, or wife and children may only present ideas of difficulty, antagonism, and alienation. That must be a skilled eyesight that will detect the private life behind the public life. I remember a man reading a

magnificent passage in a review. It was full of breadth and wisdom, of eloquence and power. And he found out that the writer become so famous was his next-door neighbour, a man whom he had always despised as one of the driest and fustiest of mortals. A man went to Edinburgh to consult a great physician, and all that the great physician could do was to tell him to call on a man whom he had known for years, and who lived on the opposite side of the way. Such people had only read

the lines, and had not sought to read between them. If we really read them, we might find out that our neighbours are much cleverer than we supposed them to be, and that we ourselves are not so clever as we thought. Ah, well, let us do our level best, my friends, so to write aspiration, effort, and endurance on the very foundations of our moral nature, that when we or others scrutinise the characters beneath the lines, we may decipher something of heavenly consolation and immortal hope!

'WHERE THE BROOK AND THE WILLOW KISS.'

A word, a look, two clasped hands,
 Their plighted troths are taken;
 Their hearts are light, their future bright:
 Can aught this fond dream waken?

A word, a look, two clasped hands,
 Their plighted troths are broken;
 Their paths diverge—will they e'er merge?
 A lone heart but the token.

J. G.

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

By MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

AFTER THE PARTY.

'It was the shawmpagne; it must hev been the shawmpagne.' Mr. McCullagh it chanced to be who made these remarks, but he did not utter them aloud. He was in the bosom of his family at breakfast on the morning after Mr. Pousnett's party, 'supping' with a poor appetite his porridge, but trying hard to look as if he liked 'them.'

There was not a fault to be found with the preparation. It had not the 'smell of burn' on it. It was of a correct thickness—not thin, but not lumpy. Never had Scotia's 'aitmeal' been better nor more cunningly manipulated, yet never had Mr. McCullagh felt less disposed to eat it.

Watchful eyes were upon him, however, and he felt constrained if possible to finish the platter. Terribly full seemed the soup-plate containing his mess, which, indeed, he inwardly likened to that of Benjamin, for it looked double his usual allowance; deep as a draw-well appeared the basin of milk with which the porridge was 'supped;' keen as avenging spirits were the memories of his previous night's escapade which recurred to memory; sharper than any prick of conscience the erasing maddening headache of which he 'didna care to speak,' and yet which he 'scarce knew how to thole.'

Poor Mr. McCullagh! If any unfortunate wretch ever had to pay for a whistle, that gentleman

had to pay for his then. He would have liked well enough to stay in bed and doze away his pain, or sit back in an armchair with a 'cool clout' laid across his throbbing forehead; but either course must have placed him at the mercy of Janet, and he thought in his extremity that, like David, he would rather receive his punishment from the Almighty than fall into the hands of man.

'It was the shawmpagne; it must hev been the shawmpagne,' he considered, slowly conveying another spoonful of smoking porridge into the basin of cold wholesome-looking milk. 'I warrant ye, honest whesky never played a reasonable man such a trick. Why, I've drank—save and bless us, what *haven't* I drank in the way of good old Scotch, and slept as quiet as a child after it, and turned out next morning as cool and comfortable as man need wish! Lord, yon is a cunning liquor, taking away the head and leaving the legs! I wish I could just mind me of all I said and did no later nor last night.'

For in truth, the racking headache Mr. McCullagh experienced was but a faint and outward reflection of the agonies of dread gone through since waking that, in some vague way, he had compromised himself amongst all those great folk in Portman-square.

'Ye're no so keen on your vic-tuals this morning,' observed Miss Nicol, fastening her kinsman with a cold steely eye. 'Aren't they to your liking?'

Mr. McCullagh started guiltily.

'I was just about to remark, Janet,' he observed, with a ghastly smile, and cheeks coloured by an emotion Miss Nicol entirely failed to understand, but which at a hazard she attributed to the wiles of 'some young hussy,' 'that I never tasted porridge better made, nor stirred more evenly. There's not a lump of meal as big as a pin's head I have met with yet, and it's as fresh and clear of burn as any spring-posy. But the fact is, Janet,' he went on, diplomatically speaking the truth, and yet concealing the most important part of it, 'I did that last night which is, as you know, clean against my convictions and practice—I ate a first-rate dinner, and then I must needs put a big supper on the top of it; and now, but a few minutes after, so to speak, I am trying to cajole my appetite into thinking it can relish a good breakfast.'

Miss Nicol accepted this lengthy explanation with an implicit faith; for which, had Mr. McCullagh only imagined the extent of her belief, he must have felt immensely grateful. There was no reason, indeed, why she should doubt his statement, since no one knew better than herself the number of 'tumblers' and 'ekes' he could take with impunity.

She was not aware, either from experience or observation, of the fatal effects which ensue when a man, who has hitherto kept faithful to one stimulant diluted with water, takes to mixing his liquors, and swallowing different sorts of old wines in their native integrity.

'And that I should be such a born ediet,' considered Mr. McCullagh remorsefully, 'as to let myself be inveigled into drinking shawmpagne out of an ordinary

glass! It tasted no stronger nor water; but, my faith, I know now something about what its strength was. I believe the doctors say there is nothing will put life through a sick man as fast as shawmpagne. All I can say is, there is nothing will take the sense out of a man like it. Just to even to myself what I may have said or done after that big glass, or was it three big glasses? I mind me of Miss Pousnett's look, and I mind me about the people laughing; but I can't remember me of much more. I wonder how I conducted myself; and yet I can't, after all, have been so very far a-jee, for certainly Captain Crawford talked very sensibly as we came home together; and I know he would not let me settle with the cabman.'

'I suppose they were all very fine'—it was Miss Nicol who once again broke across the chain of his silent soliloquy—'ye might tell us a bit about their great goings-on. It's not to be supposed we shall ever see the like; but we'd fain be told how such grand people enjoy themselves.'

'Just like ourselves, Janet,' was the reply, 'only more, it seems to me—as is natural, seeing they have not a thing to vex themselves about from the 1st of January till the 31st of December.'

'But that's no answer,' returned Miss Nicol. 'How many had ye? Were they old or young, handsome or plain, well dressed or just simple, like me and Effie?'

Which last was a home-thrust which might have touched Mr. McCullagh once, but in these latter days passed him by scatheless.

'How many?' he repeated; 'Faith, I can't tell ye that, Janet; only it was a great gathering, and for the most part they were young; and whether they were handsome

or not, they looked handsome. As for dress'—and here Mr. McCullagh stretched out one lean yellow hand with a gesture deprecatory of his powers of describing, even faintly, what miracles in the way of costume he had seen—'it was just unimaginable. One grander nor another, one quieter nor another. Mrs. Pousnett was trailing about in velvet, and her niece in a wisp of white muslin that looked as if it had never seen starch in its life. Miss Pousnett had on a pink silk, Effie; and her sister was dressed in blue areo-phane, I think Miss Crawford called the gown. Talk of money, why, it must have been trundling about, while the young women I saw last night were putting on them.'

'And who was the best-looking of all ye saw?' asked Miss Nicol, with some diplomacy.

'I'm sure I can't say, it would be like picking one flower out of a posy. They all looked pretty, and they were all pleasant; but just to make a choice, I could not see one to compare with a lady dressed all in black, with a white camilla in her bodice, and pearls twisted through her hair. She was like a queen, only far nicerspoke. She's a great heiress, I'm told—has something to the tune of two or three hundred thousand pounds put by to commence fighting the baker and butcher with; and young Pousnett and she are going to make a match of it,' Mr. McCullagh added, with a little pardonable touch of pride in his withered and wizened old voice.

'I wonder ye're satisfied to come back here and put up with Effie and me,' remarked Miss Nicol, in her most jocular manner.

'Hoots, Janet!' retorted Mr. McCullagh; 'why wouldn't I be glad to come back out of that

Babel to my ain fireside? After all there's nae place like hame; and that minds me they had the march round last night, and everybody sang, "Auld Lang Syne."'

'Ye don't mean it!' said Miss Nicol.

'Deed do I,' returned Mr. McCullagh. 'We all of us marched round the room, some smiling, some courting, some like myself maybe, thinking of days that could come ower again nae mair; and the band played "Auld Lang Syne;" and then somebody—I think it must have been Miss Crawford—lilted softly,

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And Auld Lang Syne?"

If ye believe me, just in a minute everybody was singing, as with one voice,

"For Auld Lang Syne, my dear,
For Auld Lang Syne;
We'll drink a cup of kindness yet
For Auld Lang Syne."

That's right, Janet, that's bravely done! I see you can turn a tune yet with the youngest of them.'

A compliment of so dubious a nature that Miss Nicol's reception of it in total silence cannot be considered extraordinary.

'It's thinking about all those nice young ladies hinders ye eating your breakfast,' she suggested.

'Well, maybe that has some share in the matter,' answered Mr. McCullagh, with an attempt at liveliness creditable in the extreme when the extent of his physical suffering is remembered; 'but I think that supper has most to answer for.'

'What had ye?' asked Miss Nicol.

'What hadn't we would be easier to say,' he answered. 'I never saw such a table spread before, never. There was just everything you could imagine,

and many things ye never saw. Turkeys and fowls and disguised meats and cookies of all sorts; and jellies and creams and ices; and shawmpagne-cup and claret-cup, and every wine almost you could name; and the pictures all decked with holly and wreaths of evergreen; and involuntarily Mr. McCullagh's eyes sought the barren formality of his own four walls, where, above a couple of inexpensive prints, Effie had stuck a few sprigs of holly, the leaves of which were already shrivelled and making a litter, as Miss Nicol, in the plenitude of her housewifely zeal, declared no further gone than that very morning.

'I suppose it was very pretty, uncle?' hazarded the younger woman, speaking for the first time.

'Pretty,' he repeated, with emphasis; 'it was just beautiful. Out of fairyland nothing, I suppose, was ever seen like it. I would have been well pleased for ye to have had a look at it. Something that for ye to remember all your days, and talk about to your grandchildren when you get to be an old woman.'

There was a dead silence, so dead that Mr. McCullagh looked around him in amazement. He knew a good deal about women, but he did not yet understand that the average woman cares for nothing except for what she herself takes part in. The glories of the Pousnett household were not as a mere show to Miss Nicol and her niece; they were gall and wormwood—something to hate with a deadly detestation, to keep for seven years in their pockets, like the Cornishman's stone, and turn each day, and many times a day, during that period.

'Ye'll take a cup of tea?' hazarded Miss Nicol, after that awkward pause, signing to Effie that she should remove the milk

and porridge the master chose to leave unconsumed.

'No,' he answered. 'I'm no for any tea. I had enough to eat and to drink last night to last me for four-and-twenty hours;' and having thus done two good things,—namely, provided against the not improbable chance that he might be as little 'on' for his dinner as he had felt for his breakfast, and also managed to get out the word which had been sticking in his throat and his conscience,—Mr. McCullagh thankfully left his porridge and his tea and his bacon, and proceeded down-stairs, where the first person he saw standing on the mat and looking uncertainly about him was Captain Crawford.

'O,' instantly flashed through poor Mr. McCullagh's mind, 'I know I did something out of the way last night! I must have said a word to offend that young sister of his, and he's come to have it out wi' me.'

But Captain Crawford did not look like a man who had come either to seek for an explanation or demand an apology. He smiled pleasantly as he looked at Mr. McCullagh tripping nimbly down the broad easy steps, and holding out his hand, said,

'I am fortunate to find you at home. I came round very early, hoping to catch you before you went out. I want to take your advice.'

'Then, for the Lord's sake, take it some other time,' entreated Mr. McCullagh; 'for I'm clean out of my mind with such a headache as I never had since I was a wee lad and fell from the top of a twenty-foot ladder on to the causeway with a crash they said broke one of the paving-stones.'

'Why, what is the reason of that?' asked Captain Crawford. 'Surely not the—'

'Ay, just the—' said Mr. McCullagh, catching the speaker up before he could end his sentence, and framing his own in like mysterious fashion, while hurrying the visitor into his private room, that no word of such a dialogue might be heard up-stairs or caught by the ear of passing clerk or errand-boy. 'I can stand,' he went on, having carefully closed the heavy door against the outer world—'I can stand as much honest liquor as anybody, maybe more; but your flashing fizzing stuff has done for me entirely. I b'lieve Satan himself is bottled up in it, and just runs riot in a man when the cork bangs out of it for pure delight at being let loose.'

'And yet Mr. Pousnett's champagne is considered remarkably fine,' observed Captain Crawford, smiling.

'Fine! I think it is fine! Cream was never softer, water never tasted milder; but, however, it is of no use talking, my head is fairly splitting. I don't believe, if I had come down heels last out of a five-story window, it could feel much worse.'

'What have you taken for it?' asked his visitor sympathetically.

'Take! What could I take?'

'Soda-water, for instance, with a dash of brandy in it.'

'And where would I get soda-water?'

'If you have none in the house' ('In the house!' repeated Mr. McCullagh, *sotto voce*.) 'you could get a bottle at any tavern in the neighbourhood.'

'Why, I might just as well file a declaration of bankruptcy at once!' exclaimed the sufferer. 'If I was to go into any tavern in the City of London on such an errand, I'd have the very street Arabs gibing at me.'

Captain Crawford burst out laughing; he could not help it.

The seriousness of Mr. McCullagh's manner, the strength of his convictions, the disgusted sickly aspect of his remarkable face, were beyond the gravity of flesh and blood. Recovering himself instantly almost, however, the younger man said,

'As I am not known in the City, and my character is not likely to suffer, I will go and get you some soda-water myself;' and he turned to the door, when Mr. McCullagh cried feebly,

'Bide a wee, bide a wee! I'll maybe be better after a bit.'

'No, you won't,' returned Captain Crawford, with the decision of one who knew far more of such matters than his friend. 'I will be back directly, and I won't compromise you, be sure of that.' With which speech he departed, and Mr. McCullagh laid his aching head on the table, and wondered vaguely whether the thing was in creation which could do him any good.

He had a certain faith in Captain Crawford and a little in the specific proposed; but it seemed to him at that moment as if neither man nor nature could produce aught likely to exorcise the effects produced by that diabolical 'shawmpagne.'

'It does not look much like to cure a man in such a state as I find myself,' said Mr. McCullagh plaintively, taking up the bottle Captain Crawford produced, and with one eye closed surveying the contents as he held it up between him and the light.

'Try it,' advised the Captain laconically; and having found a tumbler, in which, out of his flask, he poured a small modicum of brandy, he was about to unwind the cork, when Mr. McCullagh once again interposed.

'For any sake, man, let's make the door sure first. I wouldn't—'

no, that I wouldn't—for ten pounds, nor twenty, let any one in the house see me taking such a thing.'

Many a time in after-days Captain Crawford laughed as he recalled that morning, the poor little Scotchman, his face ghastly, his eyes bleared, standing in an agony of apprehension on one side of the table, while Captain Crawford, having duly 'shot the lock,' unfastened the wire.

Bang went the cork with the noise of a field-battery, and, guided by the Captain's skilful hand, out dashed the precious liquid frantically into the tumbler.

'We're done for now—we're done!' cried Mr. McCullagh in an agony, evidently expecting every soul on the premises would rush into the hall demanding what was the matter.

'Drink it—drink it off,' urged Captain Crawford, presenting the tumbler.

'It looks awful like the stuff last night,' hesitated Mr. McCullagh.

'It isn't like it, though. Come, Mr. McCullagh, one pull, and you'll be better. There, that's right;' and he took back the empty glass, and, convulsed with merriment, placed it on the chimneypiece.

'And the Lord alone knows what I'm to do with the bottle,' said Mr. McCullagh solemnly, 'setting' that awful piece of circumstantial evidence with a serious eye.

'Smash it into pieces and put them under the grate,' suggested the Captain, with martial readiness.

'Ye little know—ye little know,' observed Mr. McCullagh, mournfully in earnest; 'about a house it's just inconceivable the few things a man can do his womenkind won't ferret till they find every in and out.'

'Well, say I had a bottle of

soda-water,' suggested Captain Crawford.

'I should not like to tell a lie about the matter,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'that is, a straightforward lie, ye understand, though I did let them think this morning it was the late supper last night set me against my porridge. No; I'll just have to put it away for the present in some safe lock-fast place of my own. I'm sure I never thought to have to do such a thing.'

It was irresistible. Captain Crawford laughed till the room rang again; till Robert, who had that instant entered the hall, paused in amazement, wondering who, in all the wide earth, it was who found it possible to extract such merriment out of anything in that house.

'It's easy for you to laugh,' said Mr. McCullagh, offended: 'if ye were in a strait like mine ye'd maybe be singing to a different tune. I'd be sorry for ye, if ye were in trouble. I'm very sure of that.'

'And I am sure I feel very sorry for you,' answered the Captain, vainly trying to compose his features into even an appearance of gravity; 'and to show how sorry I am, I will dispose of the bottle. I'll take it back to the place whence I got it, and boldly demand the twopence I had, what the landlady called, to leave upon it;' and suiting the action to the word, Mr. McCullagh's best friend, as he felt him at the moment to be, put the cause of so much dread in his greatcoat pocket and rose to depart.

'I won't trouble you about my little difficulty now,' he said; 'but if to-morrow you could spare me half an hour here, or, better still, come and dine with me at any house in the City you can recommend, I should really feel grateful.'

For a moment it crossed Mr.

McCullagh's mind that he would ask his friend in need to come and take 'pot-luck' at home with him instead; but instantly he dismissed the idea, for things in Basinghall-street were greatly changed since he gave his cordial invitation to come and taste that rare elixir he procured, nobody in London knew from whom, over the Border.

'There is more nor one good house in the City,' he remarked at last, showing which way his mind inclined.

'Well, name any place you like, and come and have dinner there to-morrow at six o'clock.'

'Let me pay the score,' entreated Mr. McCullagh, after he had mentioned a 'quiet hawtel,' presided over, it is perhaps unnecessary to say, by a canny countryman. 'I'd consider it an honour—I would, indeed—if ye would be my guest.'

'If I come home from the East with my full complement of limbs,' answered Captain Crawford cheerfully, 'or, indeed, if I come back at all, you shall play the host. Now I must have my own way.'

'Are you going there in very truth?' asked Mr. McCullagh.

'Yes, almost immediately; we have got our orders.'

'I'm real sorry,' said Mr. McCullagh, and he was so. After all, it is only when we see before us some man on whose face we may never look again, the full horror of war comes home to the minds of many.

'And I am very glad,' replied Captain Crawford quickly; and next minute Mr. McCullagh was watching his retreating figure, as he paced with long soldierly strides across the court.

'He's a right good-hearted lad, yon,' soliloquised Mr. McCullagh; 'and I do believe my head is a thought better already.'

CHAPTER XVII.

NEW-YEAR'S-DAY.

IGNORANT of Mr. Pousnett's decision, unaware that entrance into the charmed precincts of Portman-square was for him never again, Robert McCullagh junior, still with the gloss of the new partnership on his manner, took his way upon the first day of the New Year to North-street, in order to learn what had occurred when, according to arrangement, his cousin called at Pousnetts' office.

Ever since the fruition of his hopes, Robert the younger had been absent from London. The astute head of the firm with which he was now connected considered it might be, upon the whole, better if the news of his son's good fortune were conveyed to the Scotch merchant by letter. The questioning and cross-questioning to which, in the first moment of receiving such astounding intelligence, he might subject his first-born, seemed to Mr. Pousnett's wisdom better avoided.

'The less your father knows about your concerns now, the more satisfactory you will find it for all parties,' said the greatest man Robert had ever known; and possibly it was for this reason the new partner was despatched somewhat summarily to Holland, where, on one pretext or another, he was detained amongst dead-and-alive cities until Christmas had come and gone.

Then he was told to return, taking Paris in his way; and, arriving in London on the very night of Mr. Pousnett's party, started the next day to see his cousin, from whom he had heard nothing in the mean time.

Basinghall-street lay directly on his route, so he called there *en passant* to wish his father many

happy New Years; the old Scotchman set what he called 'great store' by visits and 'first foots,' and many other signs and tokens, on the first day of each January. When he entered the hall he was, as has been previously mentioned, astonished to hear shouts of laughter issuing from Mr. McCullagh's private sanctum.

'Who on earth is it, Alick?' he asked one of the clerks, who came out of the opposite office at the moment.

'I am sure I canna jest tell ye, Master Robert,' was the reply. 'I never set eyes on him before. He went out awhile ago, and then came back again—a tall strapping man, black-a-vised, and with a great beard.'

'He seems to be enjoying himself,' remarked Robert, a little discontentedly.

'Ay, he has been going on like that, off and on, this bit and more. He's maybe not quite right in his head,' with which reasonable suggestion Alick departed on the errand he had to do, and Robert ascended the stairs leading to the upper part of the house, muttering as he went, 'He must be some fool.'

The breakfast-things were still upon the table when he entered the apartment sacred to the delights of domestic intercourse, for Miss Nicol and Effie had lingered a little over their weak tea, uttering fragmentary remarks in dispraise of the Pousnett connection, and hazarding various disparaging observations concerning the ladies of that family and the ill ways of Englishwomen as a mass.

Miss Nicol had of course the bulk of the conversation, if conversation it could be called, to herself; for Effie only uttered such monosyllables and interjectionary comments as were absolutely ne-

cessary; but that she felt interested in the subject was beyond question, a certain eager look in her usually dull eyes, and an unaccustomed tone in her mournful voice, must have told any one acquainted with her that if Mr. McCullagh so far 'forgot himself' as to let himself be 'snared' by one of those 'designing madams,' she, at all events, would not prove inconsolable.

'You may take my word for it,' said Miss Nicol, in continuation of her subject, 'Mr. Pousnett will never rest till he has gotten your uncle for one of his daughters.'

'An old man like him!' observed Effie.

'He's no so old,' retorted Miss Nicol. 'He's not much above fifty, and he is active as a boy. And he has thousands upon thousands,' continued the elder lady, finding Effie made no comment upon the subject of Mr. McCullagh's activity, which Miss Nicol might, indeed, have extolled had she only seen him on the previous evening; 'and money is all that sort think about. If one of them gets hold of him the thousands will soon melt down to tens, or less nor that.'

'He has more sense, I am very sure,' said Effie.

'Has he?' snapped Miss Nicol. 'All men are just naturals when a pretty woman, or one they think pretty, is in question. Besides, he made a bad match once, and what would hinder him making another. Of all the useless creatures I ever did come across, his wife was just the top. She could not wash out a handkerchief, barely knew how to sew a button on a shirt. She was all for show and company and gossip and the best of good living, and would sit for the hour making fun of the Scotch, and mimicking her husband to his face.'

'That was Robert's mother,' suggested Effie.

'Of course it was,' answered Miss Nicol sharply. 'What other wife but her had your uncle ever, and Robert is as like her in his ways as two peas in a pod? I wonder who that is down-stairs? I never heard such guffawing before. It is some of the new fashions, I suppose. Well, all I hope is we sha'n't, any of us, have cause to rue the day when we first heard the name of Pousnett. Good gracious, Robert, ye might as well kill us outright as frighten us to death,' she added hurriedly; for Robert had come in through the door, which was a little ajar, and crossed the room softly, and laid both hands on her shoulders before she was aware of his presence, and said cheerily,

'A happy New Year, and many of them, to both of you!'

'And the same to you,' answered Miss Nicol, insensibly softened for the moment by the sight of his smiling handsome face, and the cordial tone of his voice. 'Why, what a time it is since you honoured us with a visit!'

'I have been away,' he answered. 'I only came back yesterday.'

'And how did you enjoy yourself last night?' asked Miss Nicol, looking with what she considered an arch expression towards Effie, and evidently wishing her to share the humour of the question. Effie, however, was not to be seduced into any indecorous manifestation of hilarity. She kept her eyes modestly fastened on a crumb, the most perfect incarnation of 'still life' Robert thought he had ever beheld.

'I was rather tired,' he replied, wondering a little at Miss Nicol's inquiry; 'but I enjoyed myself well enough.'

'Ye didn't see your father?'

'No; I have just come round to see him now.'

'But that's not what I mean. Ye didn't catch a glimpse of him last night?'

'How should I? where was he?'

'He said he didn't see you,' answered Miss Nicol, with an exquisite relish of her own wit; 'but there was such a throng he might have missed you.'

'I do not know what you are talking about,' said Robert, mystified.

'Why, about your party!' explained Miss Nicol, with another look towards Effie.

'There were not many at it; and you know my father never goes to Mr. Mostin's.'

'Deed, and it is not Mr. Mostin I am talking of. Somebody very different indeed,' and Miss Nicol actually giggled; 'isn't he, Effie?'

'Ay,' agreed that young maiden mournfully, and she turned the crumb with the tip of her forefinger.

'Where *was* my father last night?' asked Robert, in desperation.

'Why, at Mr. Pousnett's, no less!' exclaimed Miss Nicol, who thought she had led up to this point with exceeding generalship.

'At Mr. Pousnett's!' repeated Robert. 'Are you sure?'

'We are sure enough, aren't we, Effie? And he never came back till the small hours; and they had dancing and singing and I don't know what all, and he could hardly swallow a bite of breakfast; and he's just full of those people and their goings-on. And so you were not asked, Robert?'

'I was not in London to be asked,' returned the young man, nettled.

'No more ye were; but I suppose Mr. Pousnett knew when ye

might likely be expected back. However, it just confirms me in my thought.'

Robert did not dare ask her what her thought had been. He was so accustomed to oracular utterances covering disagreeable suggestions that he lacked courage to beg Miss Nicol to explain the remark.

But Miss Nicol was not to be balked. Though he would not question her, she would answer him.

'I'll just tell ye my candid mind, Robert. I feel certain sure Mr. Pousnett will never rest till he has got your father for a son-in-law.'

Hearing which astounding proposition the young man burst into a peal of laughter. It was too much for him; the idea of his father standing in that relationship to Mr. Pousnett was more than he could bear with gravity.

He had not a keen sense of humour; indeed, it may be safely said he was almost destitute of that faculty, but there was something in the picture Miss Nicol conjured up which caused him to laugh as he had probably never done before in that house.

'Everybody seems to be very merry this morning, Effie,' remarked Miss Nicol, vexed that Robert could laugh on such a subject.

If she intended to include Effie amongst the number, her opinions about merriment must have been singular indeed, for a more woe-begone-looking creature it would have been hard at that moment to find.

Perhaps this notion struck Robert also, for he went off at score again.

'As you are in such a daffing humour,' observed Miss Nicol, 'it is a pity you had not stopped a bit on your way up. Such screech-

ing and laughing I never heard before as has been going on downstairs. Maybe you can tell us who it is that has been shouting and guffawing like a madman.'

'I think he brought a popgun in with him,' said Effie, plaintively joining in the conversation.

'That reminds me I have brought you a little present,' began Robert, for the first time directly addressing his younger relation. 'It is not much worth, but I thought you would like to have something from Paris. It is a bracelet,' he went on; 'and I did not know what would be most useful to you,' he added, turning to Miss Nicol, 'so I bought a brooch. I hope you will like it,' and he placed two small cases on the table.

'Ye'll not keep much out of your partnership if ye begin making such presents,' said Miss Nicol sententiously.

It was not, perhaps, the most graceful way of receiving a gift imaginable; but Robert well knew the genial manners which prevailed in his father's house, and understood Miss Nicol was gratified.

As for Effie, a faint red spot was visible on the top of each pallid cheek, and she managed to get out, 'I'm sure it was very good of ye to think of me,' while something that bore the similitude of a smile hovered around her thin close-shut lips.

'Put it on and let's see how it looks,' cried Miss Nicol, at the same time fastening her brooch in its place, and glancing down at its beauties with a pride she could not conceal. 'Ye'll be grand now, Effie, when ye go next to tea at Mrs. Anderson's. Gracious, Robert,' she added, when Effie, having clasped the bracelet round her wrist, where it appeared to about as much advantage as it

might if hung on the arm of a skeleton, 'that bit of a thing must have cost a mint of money!'

'Never mind what it cost, so long as Effie likes it,' answered Robert gallantly, though indeed qualms as to the prudence of a man in his position buying anything had crossed his mind when in the agonies of being tossed up and down in the Channel.

'And what'll ye have brought for your father?' asked Miss Nicol curiously. 'I'll warrant he's no been left out in the cold.'

'What, are ye talking about me?' inquired Mr. McCullagh himself at this juncture. 'Well, Robert,' he went on, without waiting for any reply, 'so ye're back safe and sound. And how's a' wi' you?'

Considering that Robert's hat covered his family, this question might be regarded as somewhat superfluous; but Mr. McCullagh had a stock of such phrases, and was in the habit of airing them on occasions of high festivity or when he was in the best of tempers. Knowing this, his son answered demurely that all with him was pretty well, that he had been abroad until the previous day, and that he had just 'dropped in'—an expression which found great favour in Mr. McCullagh's eye, and which he always pronounced 'dhrophed'—to wish his father many a prosperous and pleasant 1st of January.

'Thank ye, Robert; the same to you wi' all my heart. "Gie's yer hand, my trusty fren,'" quoted Mr. McCullagh, speaking as enthusiastically as the state of his body would permit; and Robert having complied with his request the pair shook hands with a gravity and solemnity which invested the proceeding with something of the nature of a religious ceremony.

'I'm glad ye've come back in such good spirits,' went on Mr. McCullagh, who was not himself that morning much inclined to look at existence through rose-coloured spectacles. 'Ye seemed to have found a jest that amused ye mightily as I came up the stair.'

Robert smiled. 'I was only laughing at something Miss Nicol said,' he explained. Hearing which Miss Nicol put her finger to her lip; a gesture Robert failed to notice, but which did not escape his father's quick eye.

'It's no often Janet gives us anything diverting,' observed Mr. McCullagh, relishing her confusion with an exceeding delight. 'Let's hear what it was, Robert. I'm just in want of a heartsome word to cheer me up a bit.'

'Then I'm certain, sir, her notion ought to do you good,' answered Robert, perfectly unconscious of how beautifully he was going to 'put his foot in it.' 'She believes Mr. Pousnett will know rest neither by day nor night till he has got you for a son-in-law.'

'The next thing I let on to you, Robert—' Miss Nicol was indignantly beginning, when Mr. McCullagh blandly interposed with,

'Hoots, Janet! If ye like to talk babbles, ye can't complain if people repeat babbles; not,' he proceeded, 'that I can say ye're altogether wrong in your opinion. There's many a one would think twice before refusing me, or rather my money. However, if it's any ease to both your minds I may just tell ye I don't mean to ask Miss Pousnett or any other woman-body to come to Basinghall-street as my wife. Your mother and me, Robert, weren't as happy, maybe, as we might have been; still I'm no going to

put such an affront on her memory as to marry again.'

'Indeed, if it would make you happier—' cried Robert eagerly. But his father cut short whatever else he intended to say by remarking,

'But it wouldn't, it couldn't. All I want in this world now is to see my sons doing well and marrying quiet sensible wives, that'll not lead them into debt and dance a jig with them to the Bankruptcy Court. For myself, if I can live honest and die respected, that's enough for me. And if ye could, any of ye, just tell me something that would rid me of as much of this awful headache as the soda-water didn't take away, I'd bless you,' he added mentally; but he lacked courage to speak the words aloud, though indeed Robert would cheerfully have ordered in six dozen of soda-water for him if he had only known his father desired such an extremely unlikely article.

'It was all a joke of mine,' said Miss Nicol, taking advantage of the pause which ensued to set herself right with the master of the house. 'I never thought Robert would deem I meant such a remark to be taken seriously.'

'A joke, was it?' commented Mr. McCullagh dryly. 'Well, Robert might be excused his mistake; ye're little in the habit of cracking jokes, Janet. About once in seven years serves your turn, I'm thinking.'

With which crushing statement Mr. McCullagh, deciding the conversation with the grace and beauty of his establishment might conveniently end, asked Robert if he wouldn't like to step downstairs and 'take a look about him.'

Upon the face of this earth there was nothing Robert was less likely to desire than to take a look about him in his father's

counting-house. Still he acceded to the proposal with great apparent willingness, and was duly escorted in a sort of triumphal march over the premises.

He had written to and received a congratulatory letter from his father on the subject of the new partnership; while his brothers, breaking the chain of silence which generally distinguished their intercourse with Robert, were good enough to express their pleasure at his good fortune. But this was the first time he had appeared in the flesh in the Scotch warehouse since getting his promotion, and Mr. McCullagh, though, to quote his own expression, 'his head was splitting,' determined not to let him escape till every man and errand-boy in receipt of 'weekly wage' beheld the man who was now, in a 'manner of speaking,' as good as Pousnett himself.

That a grand feather had been stuck in the McCullagh cap, no one who watched the Scotch merchant while he spoke casually about 'my son Robert' and the good thing he had stepped into, could doubt.

Never in all his recollection had the new partner seen his father so agreeable and conciliating. He hinted that if his first-born had a fancy for a relish of marmalade with his breakfast, or entertained a wild desire to conciliate some friend with a present of 'Finnan haddies,' a pound or two of hard biscuits, and even a bottle of whisky, any one, or all, of these delicacies might be his for the asking. He sampled him some 'sweeties,' and generously bade him pocket the scoopful, which Robert did with as good a grace as he could command. He asked almost pathetically if there was anything the young man could fancy, and bade

him not be shy about naming the fact if anything 'struck his eye.'

He took great care to tell every one Mr. Robert had just come back from Holland, and asked him so many questions appertaining to the Scotch trade, or rather to the absence of almost all Scotch trade amongst the Dutch, that, for a time, his son really supposed he had an idea of establishing a branch business—say at Amsterdam.

He was nice, too, in more than one respect; for he never put a query concerning the nature of the business which had taken Robert across the seas, and he refrained also from all mention of the previous evening's festivities.

'I won't be the one to damp him,' he thought. 'No doubt he will get on all the better if he has nothing to do with those wonderful agreeable young women; but it's not like he'd think wi' me, and so I'll jest keep a quiet tongue in my head.' Which he did accordingly, and Robert following suit, the great party in Portman-square was not so much as touched upon between them.

'I hope Pousnett won't tell him the way I led the dance,' considered the merchant guiltily; for cool reflection had brought with it the idea that 'louping,' and 'heching,' and cutting the figure eight, with his arms spread out like the sails of a windmill, were, perhaps, modes of dancing which had been more in place in a barn at Greenock than in a grand London house, with grand people for guests. 'But I don't think he will. Pousnett's no fool; and I'm mistaken if he has not taken Robert's measure to an accuracy.'

After a time—after a long time as it seemed to Robert—they left the counting-house and repaired

to Mr. McCullagh's special office, where before the fire was placed a most luxurious easy-chair, the son's New Year's gift to his father, which he had desired should be taken direct into that room the moment it arrived.

'Bless and save us!' cried Mr. McCullagh, rubbing his eyes in astonishment, and perhaps, for the moment, imagining the 'shawmpagne' was at some new trick and causing him to see double. 'What's that?'

'A comfortable chair for you, father, which I knew you would not get for yourself,' answered the young man. 'It was the only thing I could think of, you would be likely to use.'

Mr. McCullagh did not immediately reply. He went and looked the new purchase over carefully: he pressed down its springs, he felt its stuffing, he patted it gently twice or thrice; he sat down in it, and leaned his head, his still aching head, back with a sense of delightful comfort; then his poor little eyes filled with tears, and rising, he 'gripped' Robert's hand once more, with a feeling stirring at his heart more like love than he had ever felt for him.

'Ye'll mak' a lazy man of me, I doubt,' he said, in a light and sportive manner; but Robert saw the tears, and felt if he had paid ten times the amount for the chair he would have been amply rewarded.

'I must go back to the office now,' he remarked. 'Mr. Pousnett is sure to want to see me.'

'Go then, my lad,' answered Mr. McCullagh; 'and guid go wi' ye!'

As he went away from the door Robert looked at his watch, and found it was necessary he should defer calling in North-street until the next day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN NORTH-STREET.

THE 2d of January found Mr. McCullagh's headache vanished, and Robert so hard at work in his new capacity as partner, that it did not seem to him he should ever be able again to steal enough time during business hours to call upon his cousin.

The life in those early days he regarded as delightful. With what a feeling of importance he took possession of his new room, where he had often stood an inferior before one of his masters! How carefully he scrutinised the furniture and locked the drawers! How charming it was to stand upon his own hearth—nay, before his own fire—and chat with this great shipper or that well-known financier no longer as a mere manager, but as the equal of any man who might come there.

Yes, it was worth the price he had paid for it, or rather it was worth the price he should have to pay for it. Robert decided this deliberately, though he had come to the conclusion, while wandering in foreign lands, that the price would prove heavy. People who had merely nodded before touched their hats to him now; those who in passing had only said 'Good-day!' crossed the street to shake hands with him. It was quite wonderful to consider the number of persons who were 'so glad' and 'so delighted' and 'so gratified' (though not surprised) to hear he had been taken into partnership. The arid City suddenly blossomed like the rose; the pavements he had often found somewhat dull and dirty put on a gala-dress to welcome this fortunate individual's return. Life in a moment seemed all made up of sunshine. It was not a particularly nice day—indeed, it was

a most abominably disagreeable one; but it seemed to the new partner that the weather was better than he had ever known it. In a moment existence had become a fairy-tale, and he was walking through a land of enchantment enchanted.

'Have you heard from your cousin since you went away?' asked Mr. Pousnett casually of the new partner.

No; his new partner had heard nothing about Alfred Mostin.

'He refused the post I offered him here,' said Mr. Pousnett, forgetful, perhaps, that Mr. Robert McCullagh might as well have been consulted about that offer.

'I do not think you would have found the arrangements satisfactory if he had accepted it,' hazarded Robert.

'I differ from you there,' answered Mr. Pousnett. 'I took to your cousin immensely. A man of parts—wonderfully clever, extremely original. He ought to have been your father's son instead of you.' And, having paid Robert this doubtful compliment, Mr. Pousnett smiled graciously.

The new partner coloured. He scarcely knew whether to understand his senior's remark as intended for a sneer at his father or a joke at himself, and, under the circumstances, wisely made only a general proposition, which committed him to nothing—namely, that Alf Mostin was certainly original in his fancy for 'going about the City in a worse coat than man ever elected to wear before.'

'Never mind about the coat,' said Mr. Pousnett, whose own fit him like his skin; 'it is what lies underneath I look at—the man who wears the coat; and I confess I feel sorry your cousin and I could not come to terms.'

'I know Alf better than you, sir,' ventured Robert, who in Mr. Pousnett's presence still felt himself a very small person indeed; 'and I am quite sure you could not have got on together. He is a man who never did and who never will do any good for himself or any other person.'

'That is exactly what Mr. Snow told me,' remarked Mr. Pousnett; 'yet still, as I am very obstinate, I hold to my own opinion. At all events, I should like to have tried to do him some good, but he would not let me.'

'Would not let you?' repeated Robert, mystified.

'No, he would not have anything to do with me at any price,' explained Mr. Pousnett suavely. 'Said he preferred his "diggings"—I use his own expression—in North-street to the best lodgings in London, and his own employment, whatever that may be, to the highest post I could offer him.'

'Alf said that in so many words!' exclaimed the younger McCullagh.

'Alf said that in his own terse and expressive phraseology,' repeated Mr. Pousnett. 'Commenting to you upon his utterances, I can only say I am very sorry, for I liked the young man, and I think he might have grown to like me.'

'He could not help doing that, sir,' said Robert warmly; a pleasant flattery Mr. Pousnett acknowledged with a courteous inclination of his head.

'And now, McCullagh,' the senior partner began, 'there is a little word on business I want to say to you. Don't look alarmed; it is not an unpleasant word,' he went on; for Robert, perhaps from the adverse circumstances which attended his childhood, and the shifty sort of existence he was associated with when a

boy, had a trick of starting and turning red when surprised by any unexpected utterance, as if he imagined something disagreeable must be impending. 'I have been thinking most seriously about that Snow business, and what it is best to do concerning it. I may tell you candidly that, if I had not given you my word to take you into partnership for a certain sum of money, nothing on earth should have induced me to accept a partner hampered as you are; but there is no use in dwelling upon that now. What we must do is, try to get you out of such hands as soon as possible. No doubt you have been worrying yourself as to how the mere interest is to be paid; and what I want to say is this: Come to me a day or two before you require any given amount, and out of my private account I will advance the sum necessary, which you can afterwards repay to me. In a business such as this it would be destruction if once it were known any partner was in straitened circumstances; and therefore, while depending upon you to exercise all possible economy, I do not want you ever to feel short of a five-pound note. You and I can arrange all that. Do not draw upon your share in the firm except in a lump sum twice a year. Come to me. Just think over the position, and say what you can live upon, burdened as you are; and every week I will give you enough to go on with, and at the end of each six months we will try to satisfy Mr. Snow.'

'If my heart's blood, Mr. Pousnett—' began Robert.

'No, my dear friend,' interrupted Mr. Pousnett easily, 'your heart's blood could not be of the slightest service to me; quite the contrary. We are rowing in the same boat now; and all I ask of

you is, to keep as well in health as you can, and advance our mutual interests as much as possible. When shall you see your cousin?

'I thought of going round to his place this afternoon, but there are so many things to do.'

'Leave them undone, then,' interrupted Mr. Pousnett, who knew very well speed was not his partner's strong point. 'There is nothing that won't keep till to-morrow. Go to Mr. Mostin, and say I have not yet filled up the post I offered him. He can still have it if he choose to come.'

'I will certainly give him your message, sir,' answered Robert. 'Still, I cannot help repeating my former opinion—'

There came a change over Mr. Pousnett's face, which stopped the further words Robert would have spoken even upon his lips. Contempt, astonishment, anger, strove together for an instant; then in a perfectly smooth voice the senior partner said,

'We need not go over all that ground again. I have not forgotten your expressed opinion, but I do not attach the slightest value to it. I want Mr. Mostin, and I know why I want him. I understand you perfectly, but you do not understand me.'

A statement so undeniably true and so crushing, not merely as to its matter, but also in its manner, that Robert shrank timidly back into his shell, feeling that, as manager, he had never got such a snub. In a vague intangible sort of way he began to comprehend although he might to the outside world be Mr. Pousnett's partner, to that gentleman himself he could never seem other than a servant, and a not very indispensable servant either.

'My father was right,' he thought bitterly. 'They did not want me here;' and then he ob-

served aloud, abjectly enough, that he would go at once to his cousin's and tell him what Mr. Pousnett said.

The short winter's day was hastening to its close as Robert walked through the filthy streets, which a fall of snow overnight rendered hateful to traverse. The side-paths were unsafe, sloppy, greasy—fenced in by a bulwark of mud and snow swept off the pavement, with which in those days, as in these, the authorities were simply incompetent to deal. The horse-roads were a mass of black sludge and mire. In the morning they had been bad enough; but the traffic of the intervening hours, the wheels of thousands of vehicles, the hoofs of horses, the feet of pedestrians, had worked the City thoroughfares into a state of dirt and discomfort unimaginable save to those who had to pursue their way through them.

Gas was blazing in banks and offices as Robert, in the gloomiest of tempers, in the most depressed of spirits, pursued his wretched walk. The evening was dark and lowering, giving a promise of more snow, which promise it righteously fulfilled. Aloft in upper stories dim lights burned fitfully. The City, never cheerful in winter at that especial hour, looked its gloomiest. In dreary graveyards the untrodden snow lay thick over the forgotten dead; up lonely courts solitary lamps blinked sadly; churches, pent between buildings trying to elbow them off the face of the earth, looked more forlorn and melancholy, Robert thought, than he had ever fancied them before. A murky sky brooded overhead—a sky which seemed to hold no promise of moon or stars again in the lifetime of man. In the less frequented lanes and alleys which he trod, the sullen roar of the

City's traffic sounded mournful and solemn as the wash of the waves upon some flat and dreary coast.

In all his previous experiences of London the new partner had not felt the time and circumstances so utterly depressing. There was a penetrating chilliness in the air which bade defiance to the thickest top-coat, buttoned close though it might be; whilst the down-trodden snow struck a damp to the feet which ordinary leather seemed powerless to resist.

Walking through the sludge of the streets, shivering at each corner in the teeth of a blast which cut, sharp and stinging, as if it had come but that moment from the North Pole, Robert McCullagh, going over all his grievances, felt as if he hated Alf Mostin. The love he once entertained for him, the affection which not so long ago appeared so exceeding strong, was departed, and he told himself he had hitherto mistaken his cousin's character; and that now, for the first time, he saw the spendthrift, the ne'er-do-weel, the man who had no compunction about dipping his hand into other men's pockets, as he really was.

Once Robert had heard an irate creditor speak of Mr. Alfred Mostin as a 'plausible rascal,' and had felt not unnaturally indignant at such a description of his relative: but now, recalling Alf's long and unprosperous career,—the chances out of which he had made nothing; the loans and gifts, which might as well, for any good they effected, have been cast into the Thames; the eternal getting into debt; the total failure to emerge from it; the shifts, the subterfuges, the dirty water, the humble pie, the false excuses, the hopeful messages, the broken promises, the monotonous round of continual disaster,—Robert as-

sured his own soul Alfred Mostin was not a desirable individual to know, and determined he would see as little of him as possible for the future.

Wherever his cousin went, the model young man reflected angrily, he was preferred before him. He had a way which 'took' people, which deceived them, and which might eventually lead to some very unpleasant complications.

Take Mr. Pousnett, for instance; he was totally wrong in his estimate of the North-street hermit. He did not know the way in which Alf wasted his life; he had not the faintest idea that Mr. Mostin cooked his own bacon for breakfast, and drank spirits-and-water, with a diligence which characterised no other proceeding of his life, far into the small hours of the night. Alf had no idea of respectability. The household gods most men worship seemed to him but as the gods of the heathen. He would sacrifice no single whim or fancy on the social altar. He did not have his boots blacked, or brush his hat, or wear a good coat, or get his hair properly cut, or do anything other people did except wash himself.

He washed far too much, his capacious relative decided; '*Far more than I do*,' thought Robert; 'and yet how superior in every respect I look!' Mr. Robert perhaps would have looked the better—as, indeed, Alf Mostin once told him—'if a little of the starch had been got out;' but he deemed himself as near perfection as man could well be.

For years and years who so particular as Robert McCullagh junior as to what he wore, where he went, whom he knew, those he was seen out walking with? Whilst his cousin would go into the gallery of a third-rate theatre

and enjoy himself as much as, or perhaps better than, any swell in the stalls.

Simply, Robert, with the snow insidiously working its way into his boots, and the gloom of that gloomy evening oppressing his soul, felt it was disgusting. He recalled all Alf's sins of omission and commission, all the things he had ever done which he should not have done, all the works he had left unperformed he ought to have cleared away out of hand; and then he returned to the unpardonable fault his cousin had committed of taking Mr. Pousnett's fancy, and causing Robert to receive a snub when he told his chief he knew Alfred Mostin better than he did.

'If Alf comes into the house in any capacity,' considered the new partner, who had been lashing himself up into a state of ridiculous irritation as he paced the sloppy and slippery thoroughfares, 'I will ask Mr. Pousnett whether he can't send me abroad. I never could enter the office comfortably, supposing his coat and hat were hanging on any peg in it.'

And yet he had loved Alf Mostin once, and Alf had helped him in many a difficulty; and they had made the midnight echoes ring with laughter, and Robert had formerly thought his cousin the best and cleverest of men.

And now Alfred Mostin's sins were that he had helped Robert to compass his desires, and that Mr. Pousnett said he liked him.

When once the lawyer's offices were passed at North-street, the visitor was compelled to make his way upward in darkness to Mr. Mostin's rooms. Had that gentleman possessed a gas-burner on either landing, he would have omitted to light it. Once, when expostulated with on the subject,

he expressed a hope one of his numerous duns might break his neck when descending from the office, and so 'prove a warning to others of the same class, as a kite nailed up against a barn-door is supposed to influence the morals of his fellow birds of prey.

'I often wish,' he said, 'I had some place where I could pull up the ladder after me!' Failing which he made the ascent to his den as difficult as narrow stairs, an awkward turn or two, and an almost total deficiency of light by night or day, could render it.

As, however, Robert McCullagh, after floundering through the Cimmerian darkness of that final flight, opened the office-door, he was met by a perfect illumination of gas. All the burners were in full play; they had been touched evidently by a reckless hand, and were flaring up to the ceiling in a manner which suggested wild indifference to the collector's next visit. The room was quite empty; the blinds had not been drawn down; not the slightest evidence of work or business appeared to warrant such extravagance in the way of expenditure. Robert knocked at the sitting-room door; but receiving no answer, turned the handle, and entered.

The instant, however, he did so, he hurriedly drew back surprised. Seated in the one arm-chair Mr. Mostin's apartment boasted, with her back turned towards him, was a lady. Standing in his favourite attitude beside the chimneypiece was Alfred Mostin, an expression of dismay and discomfort on his face: he wore the top-coat to which Robert so objected, and his hat, evidently hurriedly cast aside, lay on the shabby pembroke table close at hand.

The lady was doing two things at the same time—talking and

crying; her speech came low and soft, yet in little hysterical gusts that seemed to wave her utterances to and fro, as if wafted hither and thither by a gentle wind.

Robert could not hear her words; indeed, he scarcely stopped long enough to do so. In his amazement he had remained still for an instant; but now he withdrew, closing the door gently after him.

This second movement aroused Mr. Mostin's attention, and with only a word of excuse he followed so quickly that before Robert could leave the office his cousin detained him with the words,

'I am so glad you are here.'

'Why, what's up?' demanded Robert a little sulkily. Here was another sin or complication or indiscretion, he thought, to be added to that long list he had been drawing out as he paced through the mud and the snow to North-street. Here was, perhaps, the key to all the difficulties and disasters of his cousin's life. He had heard the old *mot*, 'Who is she?' and at once jumped to the conclusion that what he had never before suspected was the case. Here was the woman to whom his cousin must be either married or worse. In his smug self-sufficiency Mr. Robert McCullagh had already, in his own mind, preached a condemnatory sermon to, and read the whole Communion Service over, that blackest and most specious of sinners, Alfred Mostin.

Something of this must have been expressed in the new partner's face; for Mr. Mostin, spite of his evident anxiety, laughed as he said,

'You don't know who it is, then?'

'Know! How should I know?' asked Mr. Robert McCullagh,

honestly indignant at the supposition implied.

'The poets are right after all, and Love is blind,' remarked Mr. Mostin carelessly; 'yet I think if I were sweet on a young woman I should by some sign recognise her through a two-foot wall.'

'You don't mean to say—' began Robert.

'Yes, I do,' was the answer.

Almost involuntarily Robert took a step forward to the door of the sitting-room.

'Stop a minute,' said Alfred Mostin, and he began systematically to lower the lights.

Robert was not thinking in the least of his cousin at that moment, yet, as he watched him, he could but notice how Alf's hand trembled, how slow he was about his work, how dreamily abstracted he looked while he moved mechanically about his office.

'He has been drinking,' decided this modern Pharisee, mentally thanking God at the same time he was not as this wretched publican.

'How does she happen to be here—in your rooms?' he inquired, after a pause, sharply, and as one having a right to put the question.

'If you want an answer, you must ask for one in a different manner,' replied Mr. Mostin, with an outward calmness which showed he was, from some cause or other, at a white heat.

'I beg your pardon; I am sure I did not know I spoke offensively; only it seems so very odd.'

'Does it? Then perhaps you will be kind enough to walk downstairs again, and return to whatever place you came from, and leave me to do the best I can for Miss Lilands—as best I can.'

'Alf, old boy, what is the matter with you?' said the younger McCullagh, in unfeigned astonishment.

'What's the matter with you, rather?' returned Mr. Mostin. 'What do you mean by your insinuations and your remarks? Do you suppose she came here to see me—*me*? Has the partnership with Pousnett—which, by the way, I compassed—so turned your head and twisted your spirit, that you could entertain for a moment the detestable thought your words seemed to imply?'

'I meant nothing, on my word I did not,' said Robert humbly.

Just for a second Mr. Mostin looked him over, then, remarking in an easy dispassionate manner, 'If I thought you had, I'd wring your neck,' he reëntered his sitting-room, closing the door behind him.

The minutes passed. In a very agony of expectation Robert waited, watching as he did so the now dimly-burning lights. After a short pause there came from the next apartment the low hum of conversation. His sharpened ears could hear the soft notes of her voice, and the deeper tones of Mr. Mostin as he spoke shortly in reply.

Evidently they were talking very earnestly. What could it be about? The young man was working himself up into a state of frantic excitement; a dozen times he had taken a stride towards the door with an intention of opening it; for the twentieth time he was pacing the office, moving restlessly from desk to stool, from stool to shelves: it seemed to him that night he grasped more of the poverty of Alf's surroundings than had been the case during all the years of their previous acquaintance. Sometimes he would pause and listen to the murmur of their conversation in the next apartment; again the rattling of some vehicle would drown all other sound. What

could they be saying? Ah, at last his cousin crossed the room, opened the door, closed it again, and advanced to where Robert stood, still waiting for him.

'Have you got any money?' he asked.

Alas, that was what he never possessed! Alack and well a day, that was usually the question with which Mr. Mostin either commenced or finished his best discourses. Money—most important and most accursed of all men's wants—would that the man who first invented you were doomed to pass through, say, a single year of the straits Alf Mostin had known ever since he was old enough to contract debts and be sued for them!

Robert was too seriously in earnest then to smile at his cousin's words, but afterwards he laughed contemptuously over the bare recollection of them.

Money! Why, the fellow never had a sixpence; could not keep one; never knew what it was to be able to insert his fingers in his waistcoat pocket and produce a current coin of the realm, unless he had just borrowed it from some one less impecunious than himself!

'I have some,' he said, in answer; 'how much do you want?'

'I suppose ten shillings would be enough,' conjectured Alfred Mostin; 'but the roads are in a deuce of a state, and I heard the cabmen were refusing fares this afternoon.'

'What are you talking about! Where are you going?' asked Robert, a little peremptorily.

'I was going to see her home,' answered Mr. Mostin; 'but perhaps,' he added, 'you would like to do so?'

For once in his life the fact of not having half a sovereign of his own proved too much for Mr.

Mostin. If he had known from whom else to beg, borrow, or steal that sum, he would not have asked it from his cousin.

'I' repeated Robert, taken utterly by surprise, yet instantly strong in his sense of the proprieties. 'How on earth could I take her home? How, in fact, could either of us?'

'She is not fit to go alone,' said the other deprecatingly. 'Old Napier has knocked her over entirely. He has thrown up the case; told the girl a lot of nasty things, for which I should like to kick him, and for which I very probably shall some day; brought her up from Old Ford in this beastly weather to break her heart, and then coolly shows her out, to get back there again as best she can. I was just coming in when I ran up against her in the passage, crying as I don't think I ever saw a woman cry before. I made her come up here and sit down a bit and tell me the trouble, and now she does not know how to break the news to her mother.'

'What is it that has happened?' inquired Robert, who was beginning to see daylight as regarded his own position in the affair.

'Come in, and I will tell you all about it. We can talk matters over, and see what is best to be done.'

'This is my cousin, Miss Lilands,' he added, pushing open the door, and crossing to the fireplace, followed by Robert, whom he thus lamely introduced. 'He is going to Old Ford, and we may as well drive there in the cab with him.'

Poor Alf Mostin, who was ever ready to lie with so glib a tongue, whose commercial morals were of the very worst, and yet whose heart was of the truest gold, who, looking down at the tear-stained face of that 'little

girl,' as he mentally called her, was filled with the wildest indignation to think any woman should so be made to suffer.

'I was telling him about old Napier, and what a brute he is, and the shock you have had; and we will both of us do all and everything we can, if you are only able to say what you would like.'

'Ah, I shall never like anything again!' she answered, with a pitiful tremor about her lips. 'Mr. Napier said such dreadful things,' she went on, turning to Robert; and then, all in a second, she paused and coloured up to her eyes: 'I think I have seen you before,' she murmured, with a little coy hesitation; 'the day you so kindly helped me. Ah, I was happy that day!' and she turned to Mr. Mostin, glad perhaps to hide her blushing face from Robert's gaze. 'Mr. Napier felt so sure we should win our case. He had taken counsel's opinion, and did not seem to entertain a doubt.'

'But what has caused him to change his idea?' asked Robert anxiously.

'He has heard the report of the other side,' answered Miss Lilands. 'It seems poor mamma blinded herself to the fact there was another side, would see nothing except her own hopes and beliefs; and Mr. Napier is angry because he thinks she wilfully deceived him. O, I don't know how I am to tell mamma; it will kill her!' and Miss Lilands covered her face with her handkerchief, whilst the two men looked at each other in silence.

At length Mr. Mostin spoke softly.

'Go and get a cab, Bob.' He was himself again; he had forgotten another man would have to pay for the cab, in the relief of

knowing for a certainty some one on whom he could rely owned enough to settle the most outrageous overcharge.

'I will tell your mother, Miss Lilanda,' he said, as Robert vanished to do his bidding. 'We must break it to her as best we can; and if you and she will trust us, my cousin and myself, perhaps we might find some other lawyer willing and able to take up the case and carry it through to a successful issue.'

The words were hopeful, and as he spoke them Alf Mostin felt they had been dictated by a sort of inspiration; but Miss Lilanda only shook her head.

'You are so very kind,' she said, in her pretty graceful way; 'but there is nothing more to be done. I see quite clearly that poor mamma made some great mistake about it all. We really had no right to the money. She hoped, and then she gradually got to regard her hopes as certainties. Only Mr. Napier need not have been so cruel. I am sure mamma never meant to deceive him or any one else, and we will pay him all we owe. He said we never would; but he does not know us, does not understand that we would rather starve than be dishonest.'

O sweet frank eyes! O tender truthful voice! O heart which held no shifting sands of deceit, no guile, no equivocation! Small marvel that for a moment Alf Mostin's gaze sought the floor as he contrasted his own life of twisting and doubling with the calm honest innocence of the girl who sat beside his hearth.

How even her tears seemed to brighten and glorify that humble room! How lovely any room would have appeared to this poor scampish sinner which framed her young beauty, her womanly ten-

derness, her charming wisdom! Ah, well! Alf Mostin knew no such good gift was in store for him; that, let the future bring what it would, it never could conduct him one step towards a wife like Janey Lilanda.

'Wrap your shawl well round you,' he said, when at length he heard his cousin's step on the stairs. 'No, allow me;' and he drew the wrap close about her soft white throat, fastening in the brooch securely.

'I could wish,' he thought afterwards, 'women, all of them, did not regard me quite so much as their grandfather or their brother,' for she evidently did not mind the slight familiarity she certainly would have resented from another man. She did not know how his hand shook and his colour came and went; but Robert noted all these signs and tokens, and, failing to comprehend what they meant, was confirmed in his opinion that 'Alf had been drinking.'

No such idea, however, crossed Miss Lilanda's mind, as he drew her arm within his own to conduct her down the difficult staircase, as he handed her into the cab, and took his place opposite to her, Robert following and seating himself beside his cousin.

Almost in silence the journey was performed. They reached the cottage; the little maid opened the door and said,

'Your mamma has been in a way about you, miss!'

They all entered the parlour together, and then instantly Mrs. Lilanda, looking in her daughter's face, cried out,

'What has happened, Janey! What is wrong?'

For answer Janey only cast herself on her mother's breast, and then Mr. Mostin spoke.

He never afterwards could tell,

neither could any of them subsequently remember precisely, what he said, but he told the story somehow.

Calmly enough Mrs. Lilands put her daughter aside, and stood erect listening to his words.

She did not make a single comment or put a solitary question. When he had quite finished, she remained staring at him

for about the space of time in which one could slowly count five; then she swayed back, and would have fallen to the ground but that Robert caught her.

Another minute and Alfred Mostin had opened the hall-door and rushed out, leaped the paling, and was speeding through the darkness of that unknown neighbourhood for the nearest doctor.

(To be continued.)

DREAM MEMORIES.

WHEN the spring creeps up through the golden glades,
And the woodlands sleep in their daffodil bed,
In the dreaming time, ere the daylight fades,
Will you think of a dream that was long since dead?
Will you think of the spring when first we met,
And of April suns that for ever have set?

When the world is red with the summer rose,
And sweet with the music of mellow June,
Will you miss some light when the sunset glows,
Till the song of the summer seem scarce in tune?
Will you say how swiftly the June days went
In the fulness of last year's sweet content?

When the reapers rest in the ruddy gold
Of the ripening fields on the breezy down,
Will you think of the time when our tale was told,
And our hopes were ripe for the reaping down?
When the fields of life that flowered of late
Were stripped and swept by the scythe of Fate.

When the world is awaiting the spring's sweet prime,
And the snow lies soft over forest and field,
Will you think how we wept in the winter time,
Ere the pain of our parting was numbed and healed?
When the 'love of your life-time' was just new-born,
And your 'life-long sorrow' was scarce out-worn?

A life-long sorrow! I mind me yet,
When we stood in the glow of the golden grain;
'Twere better, you said, that I should forget,
'For the greater half of a love is pain.'
Ah, true! He who loves most, the most endures;
But the 'life-long sorrow' is mine—not yours!

A. S.

A DAY AT MONTE CARLO.

STAYING a few days at Nice last summer, it was of course necessary to go over to Monte Carlo. The Riviera is lonely and deserted in the summer, so far as the influx of foreigners is concerned; but at the same time this lovely region shows at its loveliest in its own proper summer season, and for many Frenchmen and Italians this is the favourite time. All through the year there is never any time when the gorgeous saloons of M. le Blanc are untenanted. For many people there is a kind of confusion between Monaco and Monte Carlo. In one of the London papers the other day a correspondent was writing as if they were two entirely different places. He was, I think, contrasting the gambling that goes on at Monaco with that at Monte Carlo. Now Monte Carlo is the gambling district of Monaco. There is no gambling at all in what is now distinctively called Monaco. All the gambling is done on the opposite height of Monte Carlo, which is part of the slender Monaco territory. It may be said only recently to have come into existence. The old historic castle of Monaco crowns the height. It commands the expanse of the lovely sea; its ramparts look down on the tiny town, and the groves and terraces overhanging the shore. There the tiniest of European sovereignties has for centuries maintained its semi-independence. The once grim castle, now decorated and furnished up after the nineteenth-century pattern, is mixed up with much of

French and Italian, and even of English, history. Here Addison came on a tour, and here died H.R.H. the Duke of York, brother of George III. On the opposite side of the valley rise the heights called Monte Carlo. It is under the kingship of M. Blanc, and is rapidly outgrowing the mediæval Monaco in splendour and population. It is a busy town, and long lines of villas climb the slopes which are dominated by the Grand Casino and the groups of buildings that are massed around it. There is no wonder that there is a large and increasing town at the base of Monte Carlo, known familiarly as Condamine. For, only provided that you are of age, and have obtained the ticket, which is never really refused, you have the entire run of those gorgeous saloons; the gardens, reading-rooms, and the fine music are all at your service, and everything is maintained for your comfort and amusement without the smallest expenditure of your own.

There are several ways of getting over from Nice to Monaco. You may go direct by rail to the railway-station of Monte Carlo. The station opens almost at once on the grounds of the casino. You must be careful to note the difference between Paris and Rome time, such difference being some forty-five minutes. As you wait, you may be cheered by the music of a lordly band not many feet above your head. Or you may go by the Corniche road, past Turbia, which here rises to the greatest altitude, and commands the

most striking points of view. Or there is generally a steamer going once or twice a day, and, when the weather is fine, a cruise on the ultramarine of the Mediterranean is most enjoyable. I devised my own way of travelling, which was partly by water, partly on foot, and partly by the railway. The distance is short enough in any case, but in each case it is a journey over which you may linger for delighted hours. I go by rail to Villafranca, one of the quaintest, cleanest, and most interesting of towns. If I should go out to spend a winter on the Riviera, I think I should give up the Anglicised Nice and Mentone, and go to Villafranca, Ventimiglia, or Alasio. The climate of Villefranche is certainly much better than that of Nice. You look at the old castle and the fleet of fishing-boats by the pier. You hire a boat, and intend to cross the bay to the village of St. Jean. The boatman will ask, and possibly obtain, any number of francs; but one is quite sufficient, and he will probably despise you if you give more. And to be in a boat on that lovely bay is most enjoyable both in fact and in retrospect. You land on the primitive little pier, and through olive-woods and gardens you reach the other side of the promontory. On the right is the charming village of St. Jean. Here whole days might be whiled away in delicious ease. You get capital fish-dinners; you have silence, rest, repose. As for fruits, in the summer you may get figs or peaches a penny a dozen in these Riviera villages. It would certainly be much better to spend one's available time in quiet spots like this than in fevered fashionable Monaco, which, indeed, has a disturbing influence on all the localities. Then there is a very lovely footpath skirting the sea,

with the fig-trees overhanging, and taxing all one's honesty to refrain from picking and stealing. You time your walk so as to rejoin the rail at Beaulieu or Eza; but however bent on Monte Carlo, you should make a point of getting out at Monaco Station, within a very easy walk of the castle.

You must be careful, if you wish to see the castle, to be there within the specified hours. The officials seem delighted to show their contempt of strangers by refusing to make the slightest concession to civility or kindly consideration. At least that is the experience of some of us. Perhaps the heavy banner of the Grimaldis may be floating over the castle (two monks supporting a shield), a token that the Prince is at home. There is something very striking in the old castle, with portcullis, bastions, draw-bridges. On the *place d'armes* in front of the castle people wander about, overlooking the rocks and the sea, and at times resting on benches, admiring the trees and the gardens. The batteries, guns, and fortifications belong to the period of Louis XIV. But the well-read student knows that the rocky spot has one of the most authentic and extraordinary histories. Beyond Louis XIV. it goes back to the time of Frederick Barbarossa; beyond that, to the days of the Roman Empire, and days of dimmer tradition still. France bought up the whole territory, except Monaco and a strip of territory three miles long, for four millions of francs. Besides the private garden of the palace, there is a noble public garden with terraces overhanging the bay, and at times there are a number of yachts in the little port. In the old mediæval time a fine buccaneering reputation belonged to Monaco. We only change names,

and not essential things. There are such people as land-pirates, and a fine modern buccaneering reputation belongs to that part of Monaco known as Monte Carlo.

The absolute luxury and completeness of all the appointments at Monte Carlo is indeed wonderful. I have seen something of gilded saloons in my time, but none have been so gorgeous as Monte Carlo. The Tuileries, in the palmiest days of the Empire, were not more splendid. There was a distinct advance even on the lavish management of Hom-bourg and Wiesbaden. Here is the Concert-room, where, in the season, Patti will pour forth her golden strains. No club in London, not even the Athenæum, has so goodly a collection of all the best periodicals in the world. Then there are music and theatricals at times, and always the vivid dramatic interest of the gambling-tables. The gambling was very quiet and modified, compared with what it is generally in the height of the season. Urbanity and politeness are the order of the day. I watched the gambling, which was conducted with good taste and good temper. I put down my own modest venture, which was ruthlessly swept away. But in the case of at least two other players, though they lost large sums, they gained still larger, and the balance was decidedly in their favour. Then of course there were the people trying their system, the 'system' which is supposed must always prove victorious in the long-run. In these saloons the interest always goes with the large players. But perhaps there is a more painful and intense interest with the moderate players. I noticed a young fellow playing very warily, and generally for the smallest stakes allowed. He only put five-

franc pieces on different colours. His young wife watched him anxiously, and retired to a distant settee. He was good enough to enter into a conversation with me, and explain his strategy. He said that on an average he was able to win a napoleon a day. He was never rash. It was evident to me that on his limited scale he must have shown a rare amount of tact, coolness, and self-restraint. It was just possible that he might pay his modest way. But the same qualities in any business career might have given him name and fortune. And I could never forget the young wife's pallid anxious face, and the ever-present possibility that he might be tempted to lose his available stock of napoleons.

I move about the place. If I want shops, café, or hotel, they are all within a minute's walk. Opposite the place there is a square, and a fine boulevard close by. The Hôtel de Paris will give you a good dinner. The ices and coffee are irreproachable. The tropic beauty of the garden is something wonderful, even on this wonderful coast. You will be especially struck with the palm-trees and aloes, and, if you go in the summer, with the blaze of colours. But the subtle attraction of the tables is the most attractive of all. The great games are of course *rouge et noir* and roulette. You find that, though you do not play yourself, you become intensely interested by the fortunes of the game, and the study of those who win or those who lose. But of course those who come to these tables are hardly satisfied with philosophic observation. All along the shores of the Riviera there is a rich idle population, from Nice on the west and from Genoa on the east, that is within easy reach of Monte Carlo. In addition to

this it is the lode-star for gamblers all over the world. The place is the *sentina gentium*. The people who come during the winter as invalids have their friends and relations, who are willing enough to beguile the tedium of attending rich friends by repeated visits to this splendid palace, and sometimes the invalids themselves will be willing to come over, not without hazard to their health, pockets, and reputations.

There are probably many cases of misery and suicide connected with this smiling hell of which the public have very little idea. If anybody has made up his mind to blow his brains out, the Administration will obligingly furnish him with sufficient funds to enable him to do so leisurely at a distance. But the number of suicides in the immediate neighbourhood is very great; and a regular list is carefully compiled and published by those who have no good will to the 'peculiar institution.' Constant efforts are made, to which it is impossible not to wish success, to abolish it altogether. No doubt the French Government could put sufficient pressure on the Prince to compel him to do so. Already the little Republic of Andorra in the Pyrenees is beset by two factions, the one wishing to abolish public gaming-tables, and the other to retain things on the present basis. At the very time when I was visiting Monte Carlo a terrible tragedy happened, which I will mention, as it came within the range of my own personal observation. It is only an example, of which many similar instances might be cited. The case was that of a gentleman, of good family and position, a married man with a young family. He lived in the neighbourhood of Monte Carlo, and attended the

tables with much regularity. He lived in one place after another, shifting his quarters from Nice to Mentone, and thence to some other locality. He ran up long bills; but as his name and family were well known he was treated leniently, and received plenty of credit. But it became perfectly obvious that all his money went in gambling. At last the patience of the landlord of the hotel was exhausted. The police called on him to 'invite him' to explain the circumstances of those large unpaid bills at hotels. Then the poor man was brought to book. He begged the officers to retire, and call again in an hour, as he had some matters of business to arrange. For nearly an hour he occupied himself in writing letters to his wife and family, explaining the errors into which he had fallen. When the officers returned they found him quite dead: he had hung himself behind his bedroom door. The story was told me by the landlord of my hotel at Mentone on the evening of my return, and I also saw a confirmation of the fact in the local papers.

It is a mistake to suppose, as is so commonly done by tourists, that the Prince of Monaco draws his revenues from M. Le Blanc and the gaming-tables. He has always been a Duke of France, and with considerable revenues drawn from France. I believe, however, that it is a fact that M. Le Blanc has entirely relieved him from all expenditure relating to public improvements and the maintenance of public order. Formerly the army of Monaco resembled that of a petty German court, of which it was reported that the infantry was in very good condition, but that extensive disease prevailed among the cavalry. However, there was only a single

soldier for the cavalry, and one only for the infantry. This reminds me of one of Charles Lever's stories of an official report made concerning an Irish church. The report made was that the congregation was small, but exceedingly orderly and attentive. It appeared, however, upon inquiry that the congregation consisted exclusively of the sexton's mother. I remember seeing a number of years ago a list of the Prince's Administration. It was considerably longer than a list of the English Ministry; but then such a humble individual as the postman figured as an important member of the Government. From two or three soldiers M. Le Blanc has raised the full effective strength to no fewer than sixty. For all intents and purposes Le Blanc is the real prince and the great historic name. It is impossible not to perceive that the vast material prosperity attained is the result of system and order and of profuse liberality. You wonder at many things. You wonder what are the beverages of which the croupiers partake so heavily, and which never disturb

the clear eye and steady hand. You wonder where the chests of gold and silver are stowed away. You wonder how far *salva conscientia*, respectable conscientious people, who perhaps utterly refuse to play, can enjoy the concert-rooms and saloons with the full knowledge how this prodigal splendour is kept up. I take the last train to Mentone, and before I go to bed I have a gossip with the landlord. We talk of the colossal fortunes M. Blanc gave his daughters, and how through the marriage of one of them he became connected with the Napoleons, though the worst member of that family. We talk of the 'system' players and of the 'company' that have challenged the bank, and of the private fortunes that have been lost and won and lost again. Then we have the horrible stories of poison, rope, pistol, shattered brains, and broken hearts. As I fall asleep the music is crashing in my ears; I recall the heavy perfumes of foliage and flowers; and then a sudden miasma comes over all the scene, and dolorous voices as from the abyamal pit.

THREE STRANGE OLD INNS.

In these days of universal reform, iconoclasm, and prose, it is refreshing sometimes to turn aside from the beaten paths of our lives, and to spend a little time with our ancestors. We fully admit the benefits conferred upon us by open space, light, and ventilation; by rapidity of travelling, telegraphs, and telephones; but we are loth to let them drive every atom of romance and poetry out of our constitutions, and we find a soothing influence in travelling backwards, as it were, and taking a holiday in the realms of the past.

Lovers of old London have been recently startled by the announcement that Barnard's Inn has been doomed. Let us hurry there ere the first hoarding is put up, and ere Bill and Pat commence their operations.

We leave the bustle and noise of Holborn, and pass immediately beneath an unpretentious little archway into the precincts of this the smallest and least-known of the Inns of Court. There is little to strike the eye, and still less to strike the ear; for the brown old buildings have nothing but a staid, modest, old-world quaintness about them, and the silence, after the turmoil of the great thoroughfare but a few yards away, is, to use a 'bull,' startling. We are in the 'outer quad,' an imposing title given to a space some twelve yards square, ornamented by a solitary drooping tree, and but rarely visited by a ray of sunshine. The little hall, with its battered

cupola and its range of quaintly latticed heraldically-emblazoned windows, faces us; and sombre stone-bound buildings of the early eighteenth-century type occupy the remaining three sides. Passing through a second archway, we find ourselves in the 'inner quad,' a considerable space of ground, wherein try to flourish some half-dozen trees, and enclosed on two sides by picturesque buildings of the Elizabethan period, many gabled, many chimneyed, and many windowed, with little dark doorways leading by tortuous rickety staircases up to dark little sets of chambers. The birds sing loudly here when the leaves are out, and the sun tints the sombre old place with a feeble imitation of gaiety. But on a winter's morning there are no leaves, no birds, and no sun; not a footfall wakes the echoes of the courts, and a fitter abode for the student, the recluse, or the man of letters, we cannot call to mind in this great city. The pump on our right hand has a 'yarn' attached to it—a 'yarn,' like most of its class, to be taken with a very large grain of salt. When the Lord George Gordon rioters were at the height of their frenzy and passion, they set fire to a distillery in Holborn (for details of which the reader is requested to refer to *Barnaby Rudge*), and the liquor floating in streams down the streets was eagerly lapped up by the maddened crowd. Many of the wretches, who in their haste and fury had drunk boiling spirits,

rushed through the archways of Barnard's Inn to the pump. There they attempted to alleviate their torments; and for many years after it was said that the water of the pump was so strongly impregnated with spirits as to be utterly useless for drinking purposes. How the fact that spirit-sodden men had drunk at the nose of the pump could affect the water of the well has never been accounted for. But the 'yarn' still clings to the pump, and probably will until, with the inn itself, it is removed. It is true, however, that the buildings on the pump side of the 'quad.' were burnt down during these riots, and that the existing houses were erected immediately after. The porter admits us into the apartment termed 'hall' by the same expansion of ideas which has christened the first yard a 'quad.'

Twenty people might dine here, not more; but when there is a dinner, we are informed that it is second to none in London for abundance and excellence. The Hall is dark, cosy, warm, and comfortable, as an old inn-hall should be; curiously-painted windows shed a soft half-light into the room; at each end stands a huge fireplace, so near to the head chairs at the table that, to the occupiers of them, a long dinner must be somewhat of an ordeal. Against one wall stands a magnificent oak sideboard, stained black by time, embellished with much quaint carving and the arms of Mackworth, the original founder of the inn. As we sit in the high-backed president's chair, we cannot help picturing the old fellows in the doublet and hose of Queen Bess, or in the bagwig and ruffles of Anne, solemnly and silently 'discussing' their banquets, and afterwards, under the influence of the choice liquors from the cool cellars

below, keeping up jest, gossip, and argument into the small hours of the morning. Holt, Burleigh, Bacon certainly—and perhaps his Majesty King Charles II.—ate many an excellent dinner in this old hall, and their features still peer out at us from canvases which Time has blackened almost as effectually as he has the walls upon which they hang.

Long before the first mail-coach was announced to run from Oxford to London between sunrise and sunset, a feat at that time looked upon as little short of the marvellous, the Borough inns were famous. In fact, from London Bridge to where the Bricklayers' Arms Railway Station now stands, one in every dozen houses was an inn, and amongst these were some of the most famous in London. Gradually the last survivors are disappearing. The old Bricklayers' Arms was swept away about the beginning of last year, and a pretentious gin-palace erected on its site. A famous old inn it was, if we are to believe a framed and glazed list of great men who had visited it during the past four hundred years, which hung in the old bar. The King's Head is almost demolished; the White Hart, immortalised by its association with Sam Weller, is falling-in of sheer decrepitude; the Queen's Head, the Half Moon, and the George alone remain unchanged and in good preservation. Of these the George is, perhaps, the best worthy of a visit. Nine people out of ten, passing along the crowded bustling street, would pass the entrance to the old place without noticing it; for it stands hidden up a deep archway, which is more often than not blocked up by railway vans. We are glad to note so little evidence of the spirit of innovation and improvement: the old galleries still exist, al-

though the voices of the deft chambermaids and the jangling of innumerable bells have long since been hushed; the great cavernous stables and outhouses, into which the Comet and Express vanished at night, and whence they reappeared in the morning all glorious in clean-washed paint and burnished metal, still are there. Time and reform have not metamorphosed the quaint little many-cornered bar, with its shelves of curious old punchbowls and mighty drinking-glasses, its sturdy little barrels of strong waters, and its strings of lemons, into a marble counter, florid with gilding and carving. Still may we obtain at this little bar one of the best glasses of claret in London; and if claret be not to the taste, a pewter of real, unadulterated, clear, bright Kentish ale, such as the stage drivers and guards loved in the olden days. We may lunch in the long dark coffee-room hung round with scenes from the hunting-field, and portraits of the old Kent cricketers,—Box, Alfred Mynn, 'Farmer' Bennett, and others. It is rather lonely now, and the long table looks forlorn; but we may people it at will with the stalwart farmers, the sunburnt squires, and the gay folk arrived from the Wells at Tonbridge; we may load the table with rounds of beef and huge tankards of ale; and we may imagine 'Gentleman Jim,' the guard, putting his honest red face into the room, with his 'Ten minutes more, gents, please! Good sense, and a veneration for antiquity not often to be met with in the modern British landlord, have ruled with the present proprietor; and he is proud of his old place, and refuses to admit that it has had its day. 'I have gentlemen come to me every year at the hop-sales time,' he says, 'who

come just because their fathers and grandfathers have always come here before them.'

Up-stairs there are nests of old rooms, some of which still retain the picturesque hangings and furniture of old times; long dark passages, flights of rickety stairs, odd little cupboards and landings where least they are to be looked for, and quaintly latticed windows commanding extensive views of roof and chimney-pot. Sunday morning should be chosen for a visit to the George; for on other days the ideas are disturbed by the continual groaning and rumbling of the railway vans in the yard, the coarse shouts and oaths of the carmen, and the shrieking of the railway whistles hard by. The hum of the outside world has ceased, and there is a universal calm and quiet which harmonises well with the sturdy old buildings and the old memories they call up.

Brockley, on the Brighton Railway, was twenty years ago as rural and as sequestered a spot as could be found within a ten-mile radius from Charing Cross. But Brockley has gone the way of all rural and sequestered spots within that boundary line, and promises, if it continues to grow and expand as it has during the past five years, to vie with any metropolitan suburb in size and ugliness. On leaving the Brockley Station the explorer's eye ranges over a vast expanse of yellow, flimsy, one-brick-thick rows of houses and villas, interspersed with fifth-rate shops and first-rate gin-palaces. Every familiar feature of the cockney suburb abounds at Brockley. The coarse-voiced huckster with his cart of fish or fruit, the swarms of yelling children, perambulators, melancholy processions of 'Establishments for Young Ladies,' linen hanging out to dry, barrel-organs,

and unwieldy policemen. And yet Brockley has a lion, 'unknown,' as Mrs. Gamp would say, to the majority of the inhabitants as a lion, but simply as the 'Jack.'

The Brockley Jack is still the beau-ideal of a country inn. The yellow villas are creeping towards it, but have not quite reached it; there are fine tall trees yet about it, and there are green fields yet around it. The house itself is heavy roofed and manychimneyed, after the good old style. Doors and windows seem to have been pushed through its walls to suit the immediate caprices and whims of many generations of landlords; a staircase outside the house leads to a sort of state room, wherein of old the village philosophers held their meetings, and wherein at the present day the wayfarer is regaled with ham and eggs, watercress, and tea. (Here it may be noted that when an inn cannot serve up ham and eggs on demand, its claim to true rusticity may be regarded as *nil*.) The Jack stands back from the road, and has in front of it a splendid elm, under which is a good old-fashioned seat, and upon which is hung the weather-beaten sign of the Jack—a two-handled leather bottle—and the jaw-bone of a whale painted green. Touching this jaw-bone, inquiry has failed to elicit a reliable response; but we have been told that a former landlord, having compiled a competency on the North Sea, hung it up as a memento. The Jack is famous now for its prime ale and its picturesque appearance; in the olden time, however, it was very much otherwise famous.

The field which lies along the stabling and outhouses of the inn was a favourite rendezvous in the latter part of the last century for duellists. Tradition tells of a cer-

tain Captain Turnbull who, when on recruiting service in these parts, put up at the Jack, and fell in love with the landlord's pretty daughter. The wench had a sweetheart in the village, a strapping young wagoner, who eyed the advances of the gallant officer with anything but pleasure. The captain, however, made such progress in the affections of the fickle damsel that she allowed him to take an evening walk with her. Unfortunately the sturdy sweetheart happened to be walking out at the same time, and met the happy couple. Angry words ensued, and the upshot was that the Brockley man challenged the captain to fight, not with cold steel or with pistols, but in the good old English style of hand to hand. The captain, although he doubtless considered that he was lowering himself, accepted the gage of battle. Next day they fought for three hours, at the expiration of which time the rustic dealt the captain such a tremendous blow behind the ear that he fell dead. On another occasion two seaskippers from Greenwich quarrelled over their cups, unsheathed their swords, stepped into the field, and fought until one fell pierced to the heart and the other was carried away so grievously wounded that he died within a couple of hours. When the 'First Gentleman' was Prince Regent, and prize-fighting was in the zenith of its popularity, many a bloody battle was fought in Brockley fields, and the Jack drove a roaring trade; but the nuisance at length became so intolerable to the neighbours that the 'pugs' were driven further a-field.

From other causes also the Jack gained celebrity. Travellers who, for reasons of their own, wished to avoid the publicity of

the old Kent road, through New Cross, chose this route through Brockley as being more lonely and unknown, and joined the main road either at Penge Common or at Bromley. Gentlemen of the road, 'minions of the moon,' cut straight across here from their happy hunting-ground at Blackheath, favoured by a densely-wooded scantily-populated country; and the landlord of the Jack rarely declined to accept a handsome *douceur* as the price of his ignorance in the case of a hue and cry.

One landlord, however, was cunningly trapped. A robbery with violence in broad daylight had been effected on the Dover road at Blackheath; that same night two men, travel-soiled and agitated, arrived at the Jack. As they brought with them luggage to some extent, and as they were exceedingly anxious that it should be stowed away and that their presence should be kept strictly secret, the landlord made no doubt but that his lodgers were highwaymen. A few hours later two other men arrived like the first, with port-manteaux, and solicitous that their presence should be kept quiet. His surprise in the morning may be imagined when his first lodgers showed themselves in their true light of Bow-street runners, and arrested him and the two gentlemen who had arrived late at night, and who were convicted and hung for the Blackheath robbery.

Smugglers from the riverside found the great stables and out-houses favourable receptacles for their goods; and until a comparatively recent date the traveller, by paying for it, might have obtained a cup of genuine 'right Nantes' which had never paid duty, and which was said to have been a portion of a 'run,' the owner of which had been captured ere he could reach Brockley to claim his own.

Artists sketch the old inn, pedestrians slake their thirst in the dark old bar, and the inhabitants of the yellow villas go about their daily avocations, but scarcely one man in a hundred knows any more about the Jack than that it is picturesque and that the ale there is excellent.

How long it will retain its picturesque appearance it is hard to say. As has been above remarked, the yellow villas are creeping up to it, and the fields wherein the famous prizefights and duels took place are placarded as 'To be let on Building Lease.' The destroyer works so silently and so rapidly that what exists to-day as it has existed for hundreds of years may be hoarded up to-morrow, and in the following week may be seen half demolished.

So let us view these old landmarks whilst we may; and amongst those that still exist in and about our great rapidly-changing metropolis, few, we venture to say, will so well repay the explorer as these 'three strange old inns.'

FEEDING THE PIGEONS AT VENICE.

AROUND their heads a fluttered crowd
Of birds let loose from heaven's light,
About their feet a murmur loud
From tame doves scattered left and right,
And over all the golden haze
Of sun that crowned the day's delight.

I stood in cloistered shadows dim,
And watched the chequered rays that dwell
The time-worn marble floor within :
Ah me ! and I remember well
The fair sweet face upturned to smile,
On which the slanting sunrays fell.

* * * * *

Fair as a pictured saint she stood,
The bird upon her finger-tips ;
What should it care for flower or wood,
When rosebuds were her tender lips ?
And in the shadows of her eyes,
More soft than brown brook-waters, lay
Such sweet awakened sympathies,
I wished I were the bird that day.

Her bounteous hand that gave them food
Had yet no gracious boon for me ;
She in the warm live sunlight stood,
I in the shade she could not see ;
And all above the light of heav'n,
And all below the restless wings,
And in my brain, like nails fast-riven,
Was stamped the memory of these things.

The world and I are older now
By many a sadder year and day,
And lines are scored across my brow,
And dreams and loves have passed away ;
But yet within my heart I hold
That scene, that face, that smile divine ;
I would that I *her* mem'ry filled,
As she has filled and haunted mine !

RITA.



FEEDING THE PIGEONS AT VENICE.

FORTUNES MADE IN BUSINESS.

XXIII.

MESSRS. THOMAS WILSON, SONS, & CO., THE HULL SHIPOWNERS.

IN the olden time, the vagabond fraternity were accustomed to pray for deliverance 'from Hell, Hull, and Halifax.' The linking together of these three places, in this beggars' litany, has been sufficiently explained by Fuller, who relates that idle and dishonest persons were afraid of risking their bodies in Halifax because of the Gibbet Law that prevailed there, and avoided Hull for the reason that it was 'terrible unto them as a town of good government, where vagrants meet with punitive charity, and, 'tis to be feared, are oftener corrected than amended.' Much of the 'good government' to which the historian refers was due, it is probable, to a strong determination on the part of the thrifty burgesses of Hull to protect their own particular interests rather than a desire for perfect justice. The early merchant-adventurers of Hull were a bold and hardy race, and made the most of whatever opportunities were presented to them of improving their material prosperity, and advancing the position of the town as a trading port. They had, moreover, a manner of asserting themselves which kept strangers and solicitants in awe; neither beggar nor prince could be permitted to trifle with the citizens of Hull. As a mark of the spirit that ruled amongst these founders of the Humber seaport's prosperity may be mentioned the significant incident of the wine-

tasting dispute between the Mayor and Aldermen of Hull and the Archbishop of York, in the year 1378. The Archbishop insisted that he had the right to the first taste, and advanced, crozier in hand, accompanied by forty trusty followers, to carry his right into force; but the Mayor repelled the prelate's attack by wresting the crozier from him, and 'laying about him so furiously' that many persons were injured and a riot was with difficulty prevented. From Hull, therefore, it was natural that those who could not or would not fully subscribe to the wishes of her governors should earnestly desire deliverance.

In its early days, when wool and leather were its chief exports, and wines its leading imports, the town was known as Wyke-upon-Hull; but when Edward I. became absolute owner of the soil, by purchase, as well as sovereign lord, the royal charter which constituted it a free borough altered its name to Kyngeston-super-Hull, and Kingston-upon-Hull it remains to this day. The convenient and commanding situation of the port rendered it peculiarly suitable for the development of the shipping trade, and it rapidly rose to the position of the third port in the realm. In 1279 the three principal English ports were Boston, London, and Hull, the amount of customs duties collected at those places being: Boston, 3599*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.*; London,

1602*l.* 16*s.* 6*d.*; Hull, 1086*l.* 19*s.* 8*d.* The warden to whom Edward I. delegated the protection of his rights and the collection of customs at Hull was Richard Oysel, and this same Richard employed numerous ships in the interests of his royal master. It was to private enterprise then, however, as it has been since, that the shipping trade of Hull was mainly indebted to its success, and the records of Edward I.'s period tell of one John de Bedford, who was a famous Hull shipowner in those days, and combined a little adventurous privateering with his more legitimate occupation. On one occasion this John de Bedford had the tables turned upon him in a rather clever manner by a Norwegian trader, Suaro Aslaa, and was nearly successful in bringing about a war between England and Norway. In 1313, it seems,* one of John de Bedford's ships captured a vessel belonging to Suaro Aslaa, valued, with cargo, at 300*l.*; and three years later the Norwegian returned the compliment by possessing himself of one of De Bedford's ships. Instead of quietly accepting this as an excusable act of retribution, the Hull shipowner made bitter complaint to the King (Edward II.), and urged his Majesty to take prompt measures to resent upon the Norwegian this affront to British supremacy upon the seas. Edward II. thereupon sent a letter to the King of Norway demanding the restoration of the Hull merchantman to its owner; but the Norseman returned answer that he preferred to let the matter remain where it was, and by his tone of defiance almost provoked Edward into taking the quarrel upon himself and sending the English fleet to chastise the saucy Norwegian.

Fortunately, the affair was al-

lowed to stop at that point; for, great as John de Bedford was, he was by no means the only shipowner in Hull. The De la Poles were by this time upon the scene, and were bringing to bear upon the progress of the town an amount of business spirit, tact, and enterprise which accelerated the advancement of Hull's prosperity in a remarkable degree. This illustrious trading family rose to great wealth and eminence, and for several generations its members were of service to the state in providing the 'sinews of war' from time to time, and otherwise rendering aid when their sovereign was compelled to raise large sums by speedy means. The first William de la Pole had settled at Ravensrod, a neighbouring seaport, which fell into decay as rapidly as Hull expanded into celebrity; and so great was the esteem in which he was held by his monarch, that he received the honour of knighthood. The operations of the house of De la Pole extended to all parts of the continent of Europe, and many were the ships that they had continually going to and fro with merchandise over the North Sea and braving the dangers of the English Channel. And in those days there were other dangers than storm and tempest, rocks and quicksands; bands of pirates infested the seas, and numerous were the levies that they made upon the Humber merchantmen. But, despite all dangers and drawbacks, the De la Poles prospered, and the sons of Sir William, transferring the headquarters of their firm to Hull, became even more prosperous than their father. It must have been a proud day for Hull when Edward III. was entertained by William de la Pole (son of Sir William) at his mansion in High-street, Hull, and a proud day for

the King also, for his host on that occasion lent him 1000*l.* in gold. It was in order to oblige his Majesty that William de la Pole came to engage in banking transactions, borrowing money largely from other merchants to swell the loans to the State. In a charter issued by Edward while in France, in 1339, the obligation the King was under to the Hull merchant is thus recorded: 'Know that our faithful and well-beloved subject, William de la Pole, presently after our coming to the parts on this side of the sea, hearing and understanding that our affairs were, for want of money, very dangerously deferred, and being sensible of our wants, came in person unto us, and to us and our followers made, and procured to be made, such a supply of money that by his means our honour hath been preserved. The said William undertook the payment of great sums for us to divers persons, for which he engaged himself by bonds and obligations; and if he had not done so we could not by any means have been supplied, but must necessarily, with a great deal of reproach, have abandoned our journey and our designs.' For such services as these it was only natural that William de la Pole should receive title and honour, being made, amongst other things, a baron of the Exchequer. His descendants, thanks to the wealth and footing he gave them, achieved still higher positions in the councils of the nation, the offices of Lord High Admiral, Lord Chancellor, Commander-in-Chief, and Prime Minister having been filled at one time or another by members of this renowned family. The throne itself seemed within their reach at one time, John de la Pole, Earl of Lincoln, being the declared heir-presumptive to the Crown, at the

time of his death in 1487, when the name disappeared altogether from the annals of the State.

From the period of the De la Poles downward, the shipowners of Hull have been an important element in the commercial history of this country. John Tutbury, who flourished in the early part of the fifteenth century, was a prominent Hull shipowner, and possessed the good-will of his fellow-citizens in such a degree, that he was six times elected to serve the office of Mayor of the borough. In those days the Hull ships brought to England paving-stones, bow-staves, wines, Spanish iron, broadcloth, and many other articles which we have since been able to produce in far more liberal quantities than the countries from which we formerly imported such things. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Society of Merchant-Adventurers did much for the prosperity of Hull; and the founding and carrying forward of the Northern Whale Fishery was also productive of additional wealth to the port. The town experienced its periods of depression, it is true; but, for the most part, was able to hold its own in the shipping world, feeling less of the fluctuations of commercial life than might have been expected, seeing how great the changes were at other seaports on the English coast. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, London was the first port in the kingdom, Boston the second, Southampton the third, Lincoln the fourth, Lynn the fifth, and Hull the sixth. Eighty years later Boston held the first place, London the second, and Hull the third, although a long way behind. Towards the close of the sixteenth century, Lynn was the most important port, Hull came second, and Yarmouth, Exeter, and Bristol

followed in the order named; while Boston, which for so long a period had stood at the head of English trading ports, had declined to the tenth position, Poole, Chester, Plymouth, and Newcastle being before her in point of commercial importance. It says much, therefore, for the people of Hull that they were able to sustain the prosperity of their port during all these centuries of change.

The Hull whaling community suffered severely in the time of the wars with France, the press-gangs making desperate inroads upon the fleets returning from Greenland, when men were required for Nelson's fleet. It is worth while quoting an advertisement which was put forth in Hull in 1798, if only as a specimen of naval literature. The following was the wording: 'Port of Hull. Britons, strike home! Revenge your Country's wrongs! Wanted, a number of brave fellows to serve for the Port of Hull in his Majesty's Royal Navy in defence of the British Constitution against French Perfidy. All hearts of oak who have ambition to distinguish themselves by stepping forward to chastise the insolence of their enemies, and to convince the world that Britannia Rules the Waves, have now an opportunity to receive a Bounty for magnitude unexampled in the annals of their Country. Each able-bodied seaman, including the King's bounty, seventeen pounds ten shillings, without any deduction whatever. Volunteers will be protected to their various vessels, and will be entitled, besides the bounty, to their share of the rich prizes which British valour shall capture from the French, whom

"We'll fight and we'll conquer again and again."

All true Britons are requested to

repair without delay to the Commissioner at the Rendezvous at Hull, where they will receive certificates to entitle them to the Bounty.'

This appeal to the patriotism of the Hull seamen, full as it was of the hearts-of-oak sentiment, and handsome as was the bounty that it was baited with, failed to attract the hardy fishermen to the Rendezvous in sufficient numbers, so the press-gang was set to work to supply the deficiency, with the result, sometimes, that the crews of the whalers overcame the men-of-war's men and maintained their liberty.

The carrying trade of Hull was prosecuted with great difficulty during these times; and had it not been that the shipowners formed themselves into an association for mutual protection and defence, sending out their ships in convoys, and adopting many secret methods of communication, the trade of Hull would have been temporarily suspended. The sailing fleets of Hull comprised, in the early part of the present century, many noble vessels, and voyages were made by them to all parts of the world. They went to the West Coast of Africa for guano, to China for tea, to Quebec for timber, to Norway for ice, to India for cotton, and to Australia and South Africa with emigrants. But the advent of steam wrought a revolution in Hull as well as elsewhere, and there came into the shipping competition a class of men with enlarged commercial views and unbounded enterprise, who established fleets of steamers between Hull and many of the principal ports of the world, conveying the manufactured goods and original products of this country to distant lands, and bringing back valuable cargoes, far more varied and rich than those with which the argosies of old were laden.

The first steamer that was sent forth from the port of Hull was the *Caledonian*, which was built in 1815, and plied between Hull and Thorne. A second steamer, the *Rockingham*, was soon afterwards added to this station. By 1820 there were several coasting steamers employed by the Hull shipowners, and a couple of fine vessels were put on to run between Hull and Hamburg, the first foreign port to which any Hull steamer was despatched. The *Monarch* and the *London* were on the Hamburg line; the *Prince Frederick* and the *Yorkshireman* made regular voyages between Hull and London, the average time of passage being thirty-two hours; the *Lowther* sailed between Selby, Hull, and Yarmouth, and a number of smaller craft, steam-tugs, were kept going between Hull, Selby, Goole, and Gainsborough.

The foreign trade has been rapidly developed during the last forty years, many eminent firms having been engaged in it. Messrs. Brownlow, Pearson, & Co., Messrs. Sanderson & Co., Messrs. Gee & Co., and Messrs W. & C. L. Ringrose were all sending steamers from Hull to foreign ports in the year 1840, Hamburg being the place with which the Humber seaport had the most frequent communication. Lines were also established to Antwerp, Rotterdam, Gothenburg, and St. Petersburg. In fact, by means of steam, Hull was placed in direct trade with all the countries of the earth, although then, as now, her chief business is with the German, Dutch, Swedish, Danish, and Russian seaboard. In 1850 the number of steamers sailing from Hull was 34, of a total register of 7144 tons; besides which there was a fleet of 453 sailing vessels, with a tonnage

of 62,471 tons. The increase of Hull steamers since then has been something marvellous. On the 31st of December 1876, Hull had 196 steamers, of a total register of 128,633 tons, while the number of sailing ships had increased to 559, although the tonnage had fallen to 40,918 tons. The tonnage on which dues were received at Hull during the year 1880 was 2,346,788 tons, made up as follows: steam-ships, 1996; sailing vessels, 1302; foreign trade, 1,657,254 tons; coasting trade, 689,534 tons.

To one firm more than any other is due this remarkable expansion of the steamship trade of Hull during the last forty years. The firm in question is that of Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., whose fleet to-day is more than six times as extensive as all the combined steamer fleets of Hull thirty years ago. The growth of this firm's operations has been one of the most remarkable features in the modern shipping trade. The late Mr. Thomas Wilson was the original founder of the concern, and in partnership with Mr. Beckinton and Messrs. Hudson did much pioneering on behalf of the Hull steamer traffic some half a century ago, when the population of the port was not more than one-third of what it is at the present time. The iron trade was one of the firm's specialties, their vessels sailing with the valuable metal to various continental ports. Before steamers were largely introduced, Messrs. Wilson, Hudson, & Co. had four sailing ships running between Hull and Gothenburg—the *Patriot*, the *Ivanhoe*, the *Wave*, and the *Susan*—and had vessels plying also to Dunkirk. When it became evident, however, that steam was to be the ruling power in the navigation

of the seas, Messrs. Wilson & Co. lost no time in availing themselves of its advantages. On the Gothenburg line they placed three paddle steamers to begin with—the *Superb*, the *Innisfail*, and the *St. George*—which proved so profitable that the firm speedily set themselves to the work of enlarging their steamer fleet. Mr. Beckinton and Mr. Hudson had now retired from the firm, and Mr. David Wilson had been made a partner. Thenceforward the style of the firm became Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., and no further alteration has been made therein. In or about 1850 the *Courier* and the Scandinavian steamers were built and added to the Swedish line. From that time to the present, we believe, Messrs. Wilson's vessels have been intrusted with the conveyance of the royal mails between Hull and Sweden. During the period of the Crimean war, some interruption naturally occurred to the running of steamers between English ports and Russia, and Messrs. Wilson, who had put on steamers between Hull, Stettin, St. Petersburg, and Riga but a short time previous to the commencement of hostilities, had to suspend operations in that part of the world for a while. They were strengthening their hold in other directions, however, and from year to year built fresh ships and opened up fresh routes with a rapidity that said much for their foresight and enterprise, while affording good testimony of the large increase of trade between England and other nations.

In the year 1867 the then senior partner, Mr. David Wilson, retired, since which time the present proprietors, Mr. Charles Wilson and Mr. Arthur Wilson, have had the entire control of the ever-extending affairs of this eminent shipping firm. Sometimes acci-

dent has led to a sudden development of a new route. For instance, during the Franco-German war the trade to the Prussian Baltic ports was suspended altogether, the harbours being closed, and it became necessary to seek some other inlet for English goods to that part of the Continent. Messrs. Wilson therefore, being prevented continuing to run their vessels to Stettin, resolved upon opening up an alternative route to Trieste. This led to the permanent adoption of the Trieste line of steamers, by means of which the traffic between Sicily and the Adriatic and Hull came to be fully established, no change being made on this line on the resumption of the Stettin trade. A line of steamers to Norway was shortly afterwards started, and some especially fine vessels were put on for regular communication with Constantinople and Odessa. Nor did the firm's efforts stop there. They subsequently established lines to Hull, Boston, and New York; and from Newcastle and London they regularly despatch steamers to Dantzic, Riga, Christiansand, Christiania, Bombay, Colombo, Madras, and Calcutta. They have likewise a line between Liverpool and St. Petersburg. In all, Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co. have fifty-four steamers engaged in the carrying trades, many of the vessels being of large size and fitted up in the most complete manner, being amongst the best-appointed vessels afloat. A strong accession to the Wilson fleet was gained a year or two ago by the purchase of the steamers and business of the old-established shipping firm of Brownlow, Marsdin, & Co. The vessels thus transferred were seven in number, and included the *Marsdin*, the *Tiger*, the *Panther*, the *Zebra*, and the *Falcon*, it being Messrs. Brown-

low, Marsdin, & Co's. rule to give their ships names from the zoological world, as it has been the rule with Messrs. Wilson to have names ending with the vowel 'o' for the most part.

The following is a list of the various steamers now owned by Messrs. Wilson, with their tonnage:

In the North Sea and Lower Baltic trades they have engaged the—

	TONS		TONS
Albano . . .	1100	Irwell . . .	900
Angelo . . .	1500	Panther . . .	1050
Cameo . . .	1280	Tiger . . .	850
Domino . . .	750	Flamingo . . .	850
Hero . . .	850	Kelso . . .	1350
Orlando . . .	1500	Leo . . .	1350
Rollo . . .	1500	Milo . . .	1180
Romeo . . .	1750	Nero . . .	1350
Tasso . . .	450	Otto . . .	1150
Bravo . . .	1180	Pacific . . .	850
Cato . . .	1250	Zebra . . .	640
Fido . . .	1250	Falcon . . .	480
Gozo . . .	1280	Argo . . .	750
Humber . . .	750		

In the Upper Baltic, Mediterranean, Adriatic, Black Sea, and Indian trades, the undermentioned eighteen steamers are employed:

	TONS		TONS
Apollo . . .	1750	Thomas Wil-	
Calypso . . .	1750	son . . .	2000
Como . . .	2000	Virago . . .	2400
Dido . . .	1700	Xantho . . .	2400
Erato . . .	2000	Yeddo . . .	2400
Hidalgo . . .	2000	Marsdin . . .	1875
Palermo . . .	2100	Silvio . . .	1700
Quito . . .	2000	Gitano . . .	1780
Rinaldo . . .	2200	Borodino . . .	1870
Sappho . . .	1550		

And in the American trades the following splendid steamers are kept constantly crossing and recrossing the Atlantic:

	TONS		TONS
Othello . . .	3000	Lepanto . . .	3000
Otranto . . .	3000	Rialto . . .	2900
Sorrento . . .	2900	Bassano . . .	2400
Salerno . . .	2800	Romano . . .	3800
Marengo . . .	2900		

The frequency with which one or the other of this magnificent fleet of fifty-four ocean steamers passes from the Humber will be best indicated by a reference to the various lines and their regu-

lations as to sailing. From Hull to Hamburg, and *vice versa*, Messrs. Wilson despatch steamers every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; from Hull to Antwerp every Wednesday and Saturday; and from Hull to Dunkirk every Wednesday. The three fine steamers, the Rollo, the Romeo, and the Orlando, are devoted exclusively to the Gothenburg traffic, and carry the royal Swedish mails, the voyage being made once a week, one vessel leaving Hull at half-past four every Saturday morning, and another taking its departure from Gothenburg every Friday. From Hull to Christiansand and Christiania trips are also made once a week, the Angelo and the Hero being engaged in this traffic. The line to Stavanger and Bergen is maintained by the Domino, which leaves Hull every alternate Thursday. The Tasso performs the voyage between Hull and Drontheim at the like intervals. From Hull to Stettin steamers depart every Wednesday and Saturday during the entire season open to navigation, making calls at Copenhagen. Then there are vessels to Danzig and Riga weekly, as well as from Hull to Cronstadt and St. Petersburg. For Constantinople and Odessa the departures are necessarily less frequent, a steamer being despatched to those ports about once every three weeks. Steamers are sent to the Mediterranean and Adriatic ports frequently also, Naples, Palermo, Messina, Catania, Trieste, Venice, Fiume, and Bari being the ports generally proceeded to in these voyages, although, when inducement offers, the route is extended to other ports of Italy, Sicily, and Spain. Messrs. Wilson's Atlantic steamers sail from Hull to New York every week, calling at Boston when required.

From Newcastle the firm despatch vessels weekly to Stettin and to Riga; and from London have regular communication with Christiansand and Christiania, Riga, Libau, &c. Occasional voyages are also made by Messrs. Wilson's steamers between England and India. Indeed, the Humber fleet is known all over the world, and the commerce of this country has been greatly assisted by the rapid and effective intercourse which Messrs. Wilson have for so many years maintained with this country and the important foreign ports to which they trade. Their captains include some of the best-known men who have sailed from Hull during the present generation. Amongst them may be mentioned such able veterans of the ocean as Soulsby, Abbott, Dossor, Langlands, Johnson, Watson, Roach, Mills, Todd, Owen, Newman, &c.—names which will call up interesting recollections in the minds of those who are accustomed to sail the northern seas. The Wilsons have always recognised the importance of efficient service, and in the equipment of their vessels and the appointing of experienced and capable men as commanding spirits have done much to insure the great success which has attended their undertakings.

A glance at the offices of the firm and their surroundings affords one a pretty correct inkling of the vast operations in which Messrs. Thomas Wilson & Sons are engaged. The offices are situated at the corner of Kingston-street and Commercial-road, Hull, in convenient proximity to the Albert Railway and Humber Docks. Very palatial and commanding are these same offices, forming altogether perhaps the largest and most suitably-arranged steam-

shipping offices in the United Kingdom. The general office is an exceedingly large and lofty room, containing eight separate departments for export and two for import business, with accommodation for the Marine Superintendent and his assistants, and the passenger insurance and postal departments. Separate rooms are provided for the head officials, and private rooms for the managers and principals. There is likewise a commodious dining-room, with housekeeper's apartments, kitchen, clerks' tea-room, and store-rooms in close contiguity; while adjoining the building are stabling, coach-house, &c., together with large stores and offices for the storekeeper and his assistants.

There is much evidence of the outer world in and around these offices—pictures of steamers in full sail, with wind and tide very much in their favour; eye-catching announcements of ship-departures, in which far-off countries and ports are forcibly suggested to the mind; glimpses of ancient mariners, customs officers, people waiting for ships to arrive, people waiting for ships to sail, porters hurrying hither and thither with gigantic burdens; and, above all, the sense and scent of the salt brine come in with the breeze, and one's heart is set longing for a trip upon the ocean. Tall masts are glistening in the sun, nodding their heads in response to the undulations of the waves, and here and there in the distance rises a column of smoke, indicating the setting forth of some huge steamer that has been charged to the full with heavy freight. Only a few weeks ago a crowd of loungers gathered in the region of the docks to witness a trial-trip, which was being made down the Humber by the latest addition to the Wilson line of steamers. The

new vessel was the *Romeo*, which had been built by Earle's Ship-building and Engineering Company for Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., to meet the increasing requirements of the trade between Hull and Gothenburg. The new steamer, indeed, has some claim to the regard of the people of Hull; for it is the latest sign they have had afforded to them of the fact that the shipping trade of the port is increasing, and that their chief firm of shipowners are determined to keep abreast with the times in the adoption of all modern improvements. The *Romeo* will be the fastest steamer sailing from Hull. She has a length of 275 feet between perpendiculars, a breadth of beam of 34 feet 6 inches, and a depth of hold of 20 feet. The vessel is of exceptionally strong build, having six water-tight compartments and an iron upper deck, sheathed with wood. 'She is rigged as a three-masted fore and aft schooner,' says an authority, 'with iron pole masts, and she looks exceedingly well upon the water. Her deck-houses amidships being of varnished teak, with a teak rail all round her poop, she presents a very handsome appearance on deck. All that steam can be made to do on board ship has been accomplished on board the *Romeo*, from setting the sails to steering the vessel and heaving up the anchor.' The accommodation for the yearly increasing number of passengers by this route is of a high-class description, and will compare favourably with that provided on the great Atlantic steamers. The entire breadth of the steamer in her widest part is taken up with the saloon, which is fitted in a most elegant and comfortable manner, with sofas upholstered in green velvet. The woodwork

is a combination of mahogany, satin-wood, and maple, all finished in the highest style of ship decoration. Between decks a large space has been set apart for the accommodation of emigrants, provision being made for about 1000. A considerable number of emigrants leave Gothenburg every year for western lands, going by way of Hull. The entire vessel is lighted with gas—saloons, cabins, engine-rooms, and 'tween decks. Most of the steamers put to sea by Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co., during the last few years, have been built by Earle's Ship-building and Engineering Company, who have earned a great reputation among English shipbuilders, having launched many notable vessels at one time and another, including ships of war for the British and other Governments, steam-yachts for the present Czar, and large passenger ships for the Atlantic lines.

It says much for the energy and enterprise of the present proprietors of the leading firm of Hull shipowners that they have been able to work their business into the proud position of being the largest private shipowning concern in the world, the one or two firms which equalled them in extent of business having been converted into limited liability companies during the last year or two. Mr. Charles Henry Wilson, the senior partner, has represented Hull in Parliament since the general election of 1874. In the public affairs of the port he has always evinced a warm interest. In 1870 he served the office of Sheriff of Hull. He is a magistrate for the East Riding of Yorkshire, a director of the Hull Dock Company, and of the North-Eastern Railway Company; he is also chairman of the Hull Orphan Asylum, and both he and

his brother are liberal supporters of the local charities and institutions. In 1878 Mr. C. H. Wilson became the owner of Warter Priory, which he purchased from Lord Muncaster. This charming property comprises, in addition to the noble mansion, an estate of 8400 acres, including some of the loveliest scenery in Yorkshire. In commercial and shipping matters, Mr. C. H. Wilson is considered a high authority in the House of Commons, and in the work of committees he frequently renders valuable assistance in forwarding practical legislation. He is greatly respected in the shipping world as a man of shrewd common-sense views; his espousal of any movement being considered an assurance of its success.

Mr. Arthur Wilson, the younger partner, resides at Tranby Croft, and not only is he known for his sterling business qualities, but in the capacity of county gentleman fills a post of honour and responsibility. He is an earnest patron of the sports of the field, and is the present Master of the Holderness Hounds. Referring to Mr. Arthur Wilson's acceptance of this office, so important from a sportsman's point of view, a writer in *The County Gentleman* recently said: 'No day is too rough, no distance too far, to stop his going out; no time in the afternoon too late, so long as there is light for this truly keen sportsman to draw; and Mr. Wilson's sole endeavour is to show sport and get his hounds well away, an endeavour in which he is well supported by a keen but thoroughly sportsmanlike field. A genial, kind-hearted, and unselfish man, unsparing of himself, his horses, or his hounds.'

Fortunate has it been for Hull that two such able, public-spirited gentlemen as Messrs. C. H. &

Arthur Wilson have, during the last few years, had the management of the leading shipping house of the port; and when the town obtains the additional railway facilities that will result from the opening up of the projected Hull and Barnsley Railway, a further impetus will be given to the shipping trade of the Humber. Hull has been somewhat at a disadvantage hitherto in regard to its railway communication, some of the chief centres of industry in the North having been very inconveniently placed in regard to direct transit to and from the port. The Wilsons have, however, raised their fleet of steamers to such a high standard of efficiency, and have so thoroughly adapted themselves to the progress and demands of the time, that they may be said to have prepared the way very completely for any future development of trade that Hull may experience.

The Hull shipping trade has, despite the general advancement which has been made, undergone not a few vicissitudes, and some firms of note have disappeared from contemporary shipping annals altogether. Messrs. Brownlow, Marsdin, & Co., as we have seen, sold their ships to Messrs. Wilson, after having been prominently connected with the port for sixty years or more, in one way and another. Another name ought also to be mentioned in connection with this, that of Mr. Zachariah C. Pearson, formerly Mayor of the town. Mr. Pearson, it seems, was the owner of one or two steamers which he kept employed in various ways at a good profit, running to no particular ports, but adapting themselves to anything that might turn up. In an evil hour, however, Mr. Pearson got into the toils of Messrs.

Overend, Gurney, & Co. He was persuaded to purchase a fleet of six steamers from the Greek and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, Messrs. Overend, Gurney, & Co. taking Mr. Pearson's acceptances for the entire purchase money. 'Here he (Mr. Pearson) was,' writes Mr. S. Xenos, in that book of his in which he so fully exposed the iniquities of the Overend, Gurney, & Co. management, 'at the head of an armada far larger than he could find work for, pay, or manage. And the advice on which these changes were made was given for the sake of securing a few thousand pounds' commission. It was not long before Mr. Pearson saw his real position. He determined upon a *coup de main* that would at once seal his fate. The American war was at its height; he resolved to run the blockade of the southern ports. It was a mad project. Some of the vessels were too small

to cross the Atlantic; others were of too mediocre steam-power; and some others, when loaded, drew more than seventeen feet of water. Some of the vessels were stranded, others were captured, and poor Pearson—driven to bankruptcy—was stripped of his last penny by his pretended benefactors.'

Since those days we have settled upon a period of greater commercial calm, and Hull has known less of the fever and the fret of undertakings of mere adventure. The steady growth of a business like that of Messrs. Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co. is one of the best evidences of trade stability that the 'Third Port' can possess.

We have to acknowledge our obligations to a little work, entitled *Hull, and its Ships and Shipowners*, reprinted from the *Eastern Morning News*, for many of the particulars here given of the past history of the port and its shipping trade.

FRIENDS:

A Bust in a Plaster Key.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'RUBY: A WATER-COLOUR SKETCH.'

'Acting the law we live by without fear,
And because right is right, to do the right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'—TENNYSON.

I.

WILD-FLOWERS everywhere as far as the eye could reach. That was not any great distance, certainly; for the scene was a wooded dingle, and was bounded on all sides by slopes thickly set with trees and the tangled undergrowth which flourishes so luxuriantly in the shade. And all up the sides of the banks, all among the twisted moss-covered tree-roots, all along the brink of the brooklet which flowed at the bottom of the dingle, there were wild-flowers—wide patches of sweet violets, white and blue; large bunches of prim-roses, high upon their stalks; beds of wild anemone, its white stars scattered profusely amid lichened sticks and sprouting ferns, and last year's dry and decaying leaves. The sunshine streaming through the branches suggested glorious weather outside the shady wood, and the notes of blackbirds and finches sounded among the fresh young leaves as they only do in May. The whole scene was fraught with poetic beauty, and was exquisitely complete.

So thought Mabel Carr as she sat with her sketchbook thrown on one side, and her chin propped up on her hand. Lovely in all their harmony of contrast as were the flowers, they were such things as dreams are made of rather than water-colour drawings. She gave

one contemptuous glance at her half-finished, hopelessly inadequate sketch; then, fixing her eyes on the beautiful original, she let her thoughts wander whither they would.

An artist, longing for some touch of life to vivify the scene, would probably have said that amid so much that was fair, there was naught fairer than Mabel Carr herself. And yet, when I have told you that her eyes were of the same deep blue as the violets at her feet, and that her hair was of that shade with which the mediæval painters loved to depict the flowing locks of their angels, I know I have not made you understand in the least how beautiful Mabel really was. There was something more to notice in her face than its mere beauty. There was much sweetness in it, and some power; while you looked you felt you loved it, and when you were parted from it you dwelt lovingly on the recollection it left behind. It would strike you sometimes as realising your conception of a perfect angel-face; sometimes it would appeal to you with all the winsome artlessness that makes a child's features fair, while child-face and angel-face alike were ever pervaded with an expression of the most genuine womanliness.

Mabel remained so still that the little woodland creatures, tak-

ing heart of grace, passed her by with no more fear than if, as she sat there in her white spring dress, she had been a statue hewn in marble. Squirrels, rabbits, robins, climbed and ran and hopped in complete unconcern; the dingle was their domain, and, so far as they could see, they had no cause for alarm on the score of dispossession.

Suddenly, however, there came a change. A footfall, no matter how light, might forbode some hitherto unsuspected danger—a moving human figure, though only that of a woman, had better be avoided. There was a rush, a scuffle, a flutter, and all the happy frisking animals were out of sight. Only Mabel Carr sat still, heedless of the approaching step, hardly less so when a soft hand was laid upon her shoulder.

‘Ah, it’s you!’ she said, without looking round or changing her attitude; and the tone in which she spoke was expressive of placid content, as if her companion’s presence was just what she had been expecting—was just what she needed to complete the pleasure of the moment.

There was in the aspect of the new-comer more of gravity than seemed quite in keeping with the gay brilliancy of the surrounding scene; this, however, was mainly attributable to the fact that she was dressed in mourning. Her face, though neither so beautiful nor so winning as that of Mabel Carr, was perhaps more striking. Its essential characteristic was strength. There was such power of purpose expressed in the finely-moulded mouth and chin; such a great calm in the dark eyes, as if they saw so far, and judged so tenderly, and were so full of love and truth and pity. As she stood behind Mabel, her darker colouring, her sombre dress, the more

settled expression of her countenance, might have suggested a shade to the picture of which Mabel was the light; but it was a pleasant reposeful shade. She was older than Mabel by some five or six years, and she had thought out her conclusions deeper under the guidance of a longer experience.

They were not sisters these two, and Victoria Lacy was a widow. She had been married when quite young, less from any strong attachment than from a sense of duty, and because others had told her it would be well for her to marry. Her short married life had not been at all unhappy; and yet, when she recovered from the first shock of her husband’s sudden death, she was able to accept her widowhood with no sense of an overwhelming anguish. Her life, however, was lonely, more particularly as her husband’s relations were not congenial to her, and she had none of her own to whom she could turn in her solitude. Then she came across Mabel Carr, and they formed a mutual friendship, as women *can* and *do* in spite of the incredulity sometimes expressed to the contrary. Mabel was an orphan; she was of an age to act as she pleased; she had a sufficiently strong will to know what and whom she liked, and she possessed a fortune of her own large enough to make her independent. Therefore when the proposal came from Victoria that they—each loving the other, and both lonely—should make their home together, Mabel accepted it with joy; her admiration for her friend and her belief in her were boundless. The bargain was struck, and neither had ever had any cause to repent it.

‘I came to see how you are getting on,’ said Victoria, picking up the despised sketch.

'I'm afraid I've sadly wasted my time,' said Mabel. 'I've done but a poor morning's work, as you may see, in spite of every advantage.'

'I don't know, Mab; I suspect the time has been less wasted than you think. These kind of mornings seem to say to me: Do nothing; be placidly happy; exist simply, and dream. Don't you think so?'

Victoria moved round a little and seated herself on a fallen trunk, whence she had a view of Mabel's face. Mabel did not answer. If she had been dreaming before, her friend's presence did not seem wholly to dispel the dream. Thus they both sat silent awhile, soothed by the buzzing of the insects and the singing of the birds. At length, however, Mabel roused herself.

'Are we going to sit here all day?' she asked, with a lazy smile.

'I shouldn't mind,' was the answer; 'it is so warm and delicious, and all so pretty to look at. Do you know, I was just thinking that if ever you have your picture painted—which you promised me long ago, remember—you ought to be taken just as you are, here among the wild-flowers, white frock, straw hat and all—a veritable Queen Mab in your own kingdom.'

'And do you know what I was thinking?' said Mabel. 'That this is the month of May, and the London season is in full swing, and that, although it is very beautiful here, I honestly prefer London at this time of the year. Very prosaic thoughts, weren't they, compared with yours?'

A momentary expression of self-reproach crossed Victoria Lacy's brow. It must have struck her that with so fair a face Mabel had a claim to find her kingdom elsewhere than amid the woodland flowers. Then she said:

'You are right, dear, and I wish with all my heart it could be managed; but—' She paused, and Mabel said quickly,

'But you don't see the fun of it yourself quite so much as you used; otherwise, my sweet, the thing could be managed at once.'

'Not exactly, Mab,' said the other gently and in perfect good-humour. 'I don't *like* having to shut myself up when I might be seeing my friends.'

'Well, but now look here,' said Mabel, with the air of one propounding an incontrovertible argument. 'You, who are generally so reasonable, and have such a contempt for doing things to the letter, why are you so inconsistent? You didn't care for your mother-in-law, you know you didn't; so why should you go through the affectation of pretending to mourn?'

'That is quite true,' replied Victoria. 'I was not fond of her; she was not particularly kind to me, and she was not, I think, a woman whom it was easy for any one to love; but I have the greatest respect for my two sisters-in-law, and I wouldn't for the world do anything which might be misconstrued by them as unbecoming or unfeeling, or as wanting in a proper respect.'

Mabel shrugged her shoulders and made an expressive little motion with her lips.

'Of course,' she said, 'I know that when once you take a thing seriously into your head, it's not the least use trying to make you change. But *couldn't* we go, if only for a week or two—quite in a quiet way, you know—just to see the pictures and to hear the opera, if for nothing else?'

'It is hard upon you, Mab,' said Victoria, as she parted the golden threads on the girl's forehead. 'We'll see if some arrangement can be made. With all

your many friends it surely can't be very difficult to manage.'

'O, I don't want to go without you!' said Mabel, jumping up quickly. 'You needn't think I'm so selfish as all that! If you *are* bound to stay here, of course I don't want to make it harder for you than it is.'

And she turned up the pathway that led out of the wood. There was a sharpness in her tone which told that her feelings—and perhaps her temper too—were just a little ruffled. Mabel was sensitive, especially on the score of being rightly understood and fairly appreciated; and she was also rather irritable, as highly-sensitive people generally are. Victoria made no reply, but followed her till the pathway widened; then coming up alongside of Mabel she quietly took her arm, and thus they walked on a little way in silence. Suddenly Mabel said,

'Have you any real belief in women's friendships?'

'I have, indeed,' Victoria replied, with calm emphasis. She felt that they understood each other so completely that they could venture on such a subject without any fear that the discussion need necessarily imply any slight upon their mutual friendship. 'I believe the capacity for friendship to be as strong in a woman as in a man, and I think it is a cruel thing to try and sneer a woman out of this belief as some people do. For just think: if a woman cannot enjoy the close friendship of a woman as a man does with a man, she is deprived altogether of one of the sweetest pleasures, one of the completest consolations in life.'

'But don't you think we women are more jealous of each other?' said Mabel naïvely.

'Ah,' replied Victoria, 'under certain circumstances many a woman's friendship does end in bitter quarrel, I know; but given corresponding circumstances, would many a man's friendship stand the test better? I doubt it.'

'How far do you think friendship would carry one?' asked Mabel, in a tone between jest and earnest. 'What would *you* do for *me*, dearie? Would you die for me?'

'I hope so, Mab, if it had to come to that,' was the answer, with a smile.

'Well, it isn't very likely to come to that, fortunately, in these days, is it? What else would you do for me, more within the bounds of possibility?'

'Ah, it is so easy to say till one is tried,' replied Victoria; 'but I think, my darling—nay, I am sure—I would live for you.'

Did it strike Victoria Lacy at that moment that to live for those we love may sometimes be even a harder trial than to lay down life for their sake?

II.

WHETHER Victoria Lacy really took any steps towards procuring for Mabel the wished-for visit to London, or whether circumstances shaped themselves from without independently of any coöperation from within, it needs not to relate in detail here. One thing, however, is certain. Not many days after that bright spring morning so pleasantly spent in the woods, Mabel received from some cousins in London an invitation to pay them a visit of a few weeks, if Mrs. Lacy would consent to be parted from her for so long.

Something in the tone of this invitation, which, while it distinctly excluded Victoria, seemed to imply that Mabel's natural place

should be among those of her own blood, jarred upon the girl, and her first impulse was to decline it.

Every one knew that where the one went, the other went too; her cousins ought at least to have had the civility to ask Victoria; if they didn't choose to notice her friend she was quite sure she didn't wish them to notice *her*, and above all she couldn't think of leaving Victoria to mope by herself in the country. All of which was not in the least affection on her part. Her frame of mind was perfectly genuine at the moment, only it was capable of modification under a slight pressure of persuasion, which Victoria Lacy understood how to apply.

So the upshot of it all was that Mabel accepted her cousins' invitation; and by the time the day of her departure arrived, her view of the whole matter had so far undergone a change that she could look upon herself as almost more to be pitied than Victoria, in that the latter could take their separation with such apparent indifference. Her very last words as they parted were,

'Good-bye, you dear thing! I wish you were coming to help me to enjoy it! I know I sha'n't half care for it without you; and as for *you*, I don't believe you'll miss *me* one bit!'

'She is so selfish,' some one once said, in accusation of Mabel Carr. To which Victoria had replied, with the calm decisiveness of manner that no one ever dreamt of contradicting,

'No; she has naturally very warm feelings, and she expects a great deal from those she loves. But she is not selfish; no, not in the very least.'

So she smiled away any momentary annoyance at those parting words. Yet I think she

must have experienced something of sadness, too, as she realised how seldom is any sacrifice or any trial—great or small—appreciated at its full value. For no one enjoyed society more than she, no one liked seclusion less; and she had accepted it in this instance solely out of consideration for what was due to others; while she had let Mabel go with no lamentations, not because she should not feel her absence acutely, but because she was determined to utter no word which could prompt Mabel to reverse her decision and forego her amusement. And Mabel's last words had been genuinely expressive of her feelings. Her pleasure in her visit to London was only half-hearted. Her admiration for Victoria, her love for her, her sympathy with her, made it impossible for Mabel to believe that she could extract the fullest satisfaction out of any enjoyment which her friend did not share. At the same time her own intense desire to be as fully appreciated in return made her overlook the true motive of her friend's conduct. The thought uppermost in her mind was, not that Victoria was cheerfully and uncomplainingly accepting solitude in the country so as to make her the freer to go, but that she seemed able to part from her with apparently so little regret; and faulty though the feeling might be in the abstract, it yet grew out of some of the best impulses of her nature.

Yet perhaps if it sometimes be a pity that we inadequately appreciate the motives which prompt others to act by us as they do, it is also frequently well that these motives should be but partially revealed. Mabel, as she sat in the train, and meditated on her visit to her cousins, was naturally led into the reflection that it was

very kind of them to think of her, and it could have done her no sort of good to have been informed that the invitation had been given mainly on interested grounds.

The Lefroys' home was in London. They had a comfortable house and a numerous acquaintance, but they lived well up to their income, principally derived from a government appointment occupied by Mr. Lefroy, and with a family of four sons and one daughter there was not much to look to as a provision for the future. Three of the sons were doing well in different professions in various parts of the world; but Hubert, the youngest—one of those attractive, popular, clever creatures, who might do anything and invariably do nothing—was his mother's darling, and Hubert must marry a woman with money.

'Of course I wouldn't ask *any* one,' said Mrs. Lefroy to her husband; 'but Mabel—a cousin and all—it's so perfectly natural to have her as a companion for Gertrude; and she has a very comfortable fortune. I really consider it *quite* providential that Mrs. Lacy should be in mourning this year. Of course if she had not been, they would have come to town together; for she has got Mabel *completely* under her finger and thumb, and Mabel is positively silly about her. Those kind of infatuations are much better broken through as soon as possible; and, anyhow, it is an opportunity not to be lost.'

It is not always that a mother's arrangements with reference to her son's matrimonial future find favour in his eyes; but in this case, Mrs. Lefroy, being cautious enough to keep her designs to herself, matters took their own course. Had Mabel's attractions rested solely on her fortune, the business might have been harder

to manage. Hubert Lefroy, younger son though he was, and with nothing but a slender portion to look to, was nevertheless not at all inclined to give mere money the foremost place in his calculations. His cousin Mabel, however, whom he had not seen since they were both children, had that about her which appealed to him far more strongly than if she had possessed a hundred thousand pounds. With her deep-blue eyes, and her sweet mobile expression, and her halo of golden hair, 'What can a man want more,' thought Hubert, 'to live with and look at day after day? This is the woman for me to marry,' was the decision he arrived at almost as soon as he saw her. So he fell in love with her at first sight.

Perhaps hardly any man, having singled out a woman as the peculiar object of his love, is acutely troubled by the thought of any insuperable difficulty in the way of his winning her. Certainly the circumstances and the surroundings of Hubert Lefroy's existence had not been of a kind to place any such reflection prominently before him. He was accustomed to be appreciated, beloved, believed in; and, though too manly to be actually conceited, he could hardly help being conscious in a careless kind of way that there was much about him that was attractive, and that set him in agreeable contrast to many of his social equals. Perhaps he was too much inclined to accept what was given him as no more than his due—or, at least, as a matter of course—but even this he did with a naïve absence of all self-consciousness that possessed its own peculiar charm. He was one of those men who are attractive to persons of all ages, and to men and women alike.

His countenance, especially when he smiled, was singularly pleasing, and was in itself sufficient to win the hearts of some; others were captivated by his manners; while for those who sought something deeper, something more permanent, there was plenty of keen intelligence and playful humour, with a capacity, too, for calm and concentrated thought. Only a close student of human nature would have detected that Hubert Lefroy was deficient in that kind of strength which is implied by constancy and consistent conduct.

Mabel Carr, however, possessed no subtle perceptions of this sort. She was open to the full impression of that concentrated effort to please her alone with which he appealed to her heart. She was fascinated by his mere smile, so tender and so sympathetic; while she could appreciate his devotion all the more that she could recognise in him one who, of a refined and educated mind, had thought much for himself, and had the faculty of commanding attention from others. And there was nothing about him, either in his behaviour towards herself or towards other people, to raise a suspicion of any weakness in her hero; nor, with so much that was excellent and attractive laid at her feet, was it indeed likely that Mabel would be quick to detect such flaws as there were in his character. Some people said he was indolent. Perhaps he might be; but that was merely, she thought, because he had not yet found the special work for which he was best fitted. Others accused him of selfishness. Yet if he *had* a slight tendency to think that the world had been created for him alone, was it not mainly attributable to the eagerness with which his parents and

his sister anticipated all his wishes, and smoothed all unpleasantness out of his path? He had a calm happy temper; his father never grumbled at him, his mother was devoted to him, his sister worshipped him.

'If he is not perfection,' thought Mabel, 'he is as near it as I am ever likely to find.'

And then it was so sweet to think that all this perfection was being dedicated to her, and to her alone.

Thus, by the time her visit had lasted a fortnight, Mabel Carr and Hubert Lefroy were as much in love with one another as even Mrs. Lefroy herself could have wished.

III.

THE violets had been in bloom when Mabel left the country; it was the time of roses when she returned. She had parted from her friend with a promise to write frequently, and during the first week of her absence the promise was faithfully kept. Then came days of silence, followed at intervals by little notes scribbled in great haste, with the assurance of a long letter next day, which often never came. Meanwhile the fortnight extended to a month, and the month was fast becoming six weeks, ere Mabel suggested returning home. Victoria Lacy, however, was not hurt by what might have seemed at first sight indifference or neglect. That Mabel seemed so willing to prolong her visit was at least a sign that she was enjoying herself; so when the little hasty notes of apology arrived, Victoria read between the lines, understanding that Mabel had something better and pleasanter to do than to write letters—even to her—and waited

patiently for the announcement she felt sure would come sooner or later.

And when at last Mabel wrote to say that her visit to her cousins had culminated in her engagement to Hubert Lefroy, Victoria Lacy was not taken by surprise. She had dwelt so long on the possibility that she could accept the actual fact with calmness. True, she sighed over the thought of their companionship being broken up, over the prospect of her own return to solitude; and she wondered wistfully whether the step would be for Mabel's happiness, and whether Hubert Lefroy were worthy of her. Victoria's own life had hitherto been more or less generally coloured with neutral tint, so to speak. She had never experienced any of those intense joys or those bitter woes which give to human existence its highest lights and its deepest shadows; and therefore, though she could take Mabel's exceeding joy upon trust, still she trembled a little for her friend out of sheer inexperience concerning the human capacity for great happiness.

Then she sat down and wrote a little note of love and sympathy that was more precious to Mabel than all the congratulations with which she was daily overwhelmed.

'I have never seen Mr. Lefroy myself,' so ran the note; 'but if all the accounts I hear of him speak true, I think I would sooner trust my Queen Mab to him than to any one else.'

I am not sure if the sweetest part of all those happy days for Mabel did not lie in the long talks between her and Victoria through the summer hours—among the roses and the honeysuckles when the morning air was warm and soft and still; or

in the evening light by the open window when the wood-pigeon's note sounded from the neighbouring trees—talks which were all of Hubert, how good, how clever, how popular he was, and how happy *she* was in her newly-found bliss! The theme never seemed to fail, never to lose its interest; and then it was so pleasant to have a listener who could put herself entirely in the background without any jealous pang to mar the full effect of her sympathy. This was the heyday of Mabel's young existence, the holiday time of her life. Victoria supposed that her own holiday time was past. Such as it had been she had enjoyed it in a way; yet it had been somewhat of a failure, and had left behind it a vague feeling of disappointment. That was no reason, however, why she should attempt to cool Mabel's intense enjoyment.

And it did not occur to Mabel *now* to dwell exactly on the apparent indifference with which her friend could contemplate their coming separation. She had found something which, for the time at least, had power to fill her whole existence, and to satisfy the demands of her heart more completely than any friendship.

'Well but, Mab, having heard so much of Hubert Lefroy, when am I to see him? I'm naturally dying to see any one so charming, let alone being eager to welcome him for your sake, dear.'

This was how the daily conversation always ended; but for a while no practicable opening presented itself to Mabel for introducing her lover to her friend. At length, however, matters arranged themselves. The wedding was not to take place till the autumn, and in the mean while Mrs. Lefroy, partly to gratify her son and partly from a sense of

expediency in keeping the young people together, settled to spend the intervening months at a pretty little place that was to be let for the summer, and which was hardly two miles distant from the home of Mabel Carr and Victoria Lacy.

Hubert Lefroy had formed a distinct conception of Mrs. Lacy long before he ever saw her, and, as is usual with such preconceptions, it was sufficiently wide of the mark; for the data on which it was based were the antagonistic descriptions of her which he received from Mrs. Lefroy on the one hand, and from Mabel on the other. The impression conveyed to him through the medium of his mother's somewhat unreasonable antipathy to Victoria was, that Mrs. Lacy must be a woman possessed with a passion for dominating, who had established an influence over Mabel by a system of flattery and by certain attractions of face and manner, which, however, he was sure, would never be likely to appeal to *him*. Nor was this impression in the least altered by Mabel's enthusiasm in her friend's favour. For it was perfectly natural that Mabel's lover should feel but little interest in her affections other than as they concerned himself, and should be inclined to look upon her friendship as a somewhat fantastic infatuation.

The Lefroys were no sooner established in their summer home than Mrs. Lefroy and Mrs. Lacy went through the form of exchanging visits, which, however, did not result in the introduction of the latter to the bridegroom elect. Whether by accident or by design, Hubert was a week in the country before Mabel was able to arrange a meeting between him and her friend. And then, by one of those turns of circumstance on which the whole fate of a life will

sometimes hang, their first meeting was, after all, accidental and informal.

Hubert Lefroy, having accepted an invitation to luncheon, made two mistakes: he forgot the exact time for which he had been asked, and so arrived half an hour too soon; and he lost his way, thereby finding himself at last in a rose-garden before an open window, instead of on the door-step correctly ringing the bell.

Somehow, when he got as far as the open window, though he hardly ventured to enter the house that way, he did not feel inclined to turn and go round to the front door. By the window was a high Japanese screen, all red and gold and grotesque figures, and on the other side of the screen a lady was sitting at the piano, and singing with all the pathos of a rich and sympathetic voice. It was not Mabel's voice, he knew, yet it had the power to keep him listening there—how long he was never quite certain; but it was long enough for him to notice, with a distinctness so that he never again forgot, the flowers by the window, the painted tiles in the flower-pot, the pattern of the carpet, the texture of the curtains. For there are moments in a lifetime when such things impress themselves upon the mind, all unconsciously it may be, yet with a marvellous swiftness and intensity.

But the music ceased; a little blue Skye terrier crawled out from under the curtains making a demonstrative commotion, and Hubert Lefroy found himself face to face with a lady, tall, graceful, dressed in black, whose face struck him at once less by its beauty than by its compelling interest. His first thought was an admission that if this was Mabel's friend she had some grounds for her

enthusiasm; his next was one of annoyance with himself, primarily, for the admission; secondarily, because what *was* there really in Mrs. Lacy's appearance to make him so inconsequentially reverse his preconception of her? Victoria was the first to speak.

'Ah, Mr. Lefroy!' she said, forestalling his apologies, 'we have cheated Mab out of her formal introduction; it is so much pleasanter to meet like friends than like strangers, isn't it? And we are friends already, I hope?'

'I hope so,' he replied rather gravely, as he took the hand which she extended. 'I am very sorry to disturb you in this way, but I mistook the turning, and, having come in by the garden-door, I didn't know how to get round.'

'It was a very happy mistake,' she replied, smiling; 'you have seen Mab's home for the first time on its brightest and prettiest side, and that is as it should be.'

He liked her for the way in which she at once identified him with Mabel. He sat down opposite to her, between the Japanese screen and the window, just in the warmest patch of sunlight, and felt already as if he had known her for years. Mabel, wandering over the grass, among the rose-bushes and the beds of yellow nasturtium and purple clematis, found them sitting so.

'O you cunning creatures!' she exclaimed, stopping before them in the narrow gravel pathway; 'so you've managed to get over your first impressions without me by to notice!'

Then, stepping in through the open window and laying a hand on the shoulder of each, she said, with one of those smiles that made her face so intensely lovable, 'And I hope neither of you ever means to be the least bit jealous of the other.'

IV.

MABEL CARR and Hubert Lefroy were sitting together on the lawn, under the shade of a walnut-tree, one hazy hot afternoon some six weeks later on in the summer. They were occupying two easy garden-chairs, and a third had just been vacated by Victoria Lacy. She had been reading aloud, while Mabel worked and Hubert basked lazily in the sunshine, snipping up grass-blades with a pair of scissors; but somewhat abruptly she had closed the book, and with a sudden excuse had gone away into the house. When she was out of earshot, Mabel said:

'Now, Hubert, won't you confess at last that she is quite as nice as I have always maintained she is?'

Mabel was busy sorting out different shades of her silks, and she did not look up as she spoke, otherwise she might have noticed a peculiar light in Hubert's eyes as he gazed after Mrs. Lacy's retreating figure. She had to repeat her question, however, before he answered it, and then he said:

'She is quite, *quite* different from what I fancied her to be before I knew her.'

'And doesn't she read charmingly?' continued Mabel. 'It really is a pleasure to listen to her.'

'She does everything well,' he exclaimed warmly; 'she is—a—a wonderful woman!'

Mabel laughed out merrily.

'Well, you've come round, certainly,' she said; 'and I'm glad you have, for I wanted you to appreciate my best and dearest friend, Hubert. But I knew you would when you came to know her—everybody likes her!'

He did not make any further reply. He took up the book which

Victoria had thrown down on the grass, and opened it at the place where she had left off reading. Mabel went on working, humming a little song the while under her breath, utterly unconscious of the expression, half wild, half weary, that had stolen across her lover's face.

But had Mabel followed her friend into the house I think she would have been startled at what she would have seen. Victoria had left the garden quietly enough, nothing in her look or manner suggesting any effort of self-repression, nothing in her words or tone to indicate a slackening of her habitual self-control. Yet she wanted to get away from the glare of the sunshine, and the buzz of the insects, and the scent of the flowers, and from the sight of Mabel's bright happy face. She wanted to be alone, to confront and to combat the truth that had dawned in her heart. For something in the story which she had been reading aloud had stirred a pulse of feeling, and had made her distinctly conscious at last of that in herself which she had hitherto but vaguely suspected. In the house, in the room half darkened by green blinds, it was quiet, it was cool, and, above all, she could be alone. That happy pair out in the sunshine, amid the birds and flowers, would not follow her in here.

'O, I wish, I *wish* I had never seen him!' was the passionate cry from her heart; and she kept on repeating this again and again as she paced up and down the room.

'If he only would go away! Why *doesn't* he go away?' she reiterated angrily. 'Why should he waste his time down here when there's so much a man may do—and Mabel's love is safe enough!'

Then she stopped in her restless pacing, and leaning both her

arms on the chimneypiece stared at herself in the mirror. The mouth, so full of strength and purpose, was quivering now with sensibility, and the eyes, usually so calm, were bright and wild, and glowed all the darker for the dark circles underneath that unrest always brings.

Day after day for the last six weeks she had seen Hubert Lefroy. He was in and out of the house continually, for he had a fair claim to be free of Mabel's home, and Victoria herself had given him leave to come and go as he listed. She entertained him without embarrassment as a hostess and as Mabel's friend; she was content to play third person without any officious interference, reading to them when they tired of each other's talk, singing to them of an evening as they sat together in the twilight. She had got into the habit of watching for him and welcoming him for Mabel's sake, till at last she felt, let her deceive herself as she might, it was *not* for Mabel's sake she watched and welcomed now.

Yet she knew that her present frame of mind was disloyal to her friend, inconsistent with her own high ideal of duty, and completely at variance with the whole tenor of her life. And then it was such utter folly. Even supposing she could reconcile the winning of his affections to her conscience, what rational hope had she of success? She was older than he was; the age of romance had, or ought to have, gone by for *her*. Mabel had youth and beauty on her side. 'While I,' thought Victoria bitterly, as she looked at herself in the glass, 'whatever I may have been *once*, can hardly compete with her now.'

So she strove to recover her normal strength and self-control by dint of hard reasoning; but it

was cruel work, and her heart went back to the piteous passionate cry, which was in itself an admission of weakness, 'I wish I had never, *never* seen him! If he only would go away!'

But by degrees a better feeling came to her. Had she any right to demand that the happiness of others should be curtailed merely to make her own weakness the easier to cope with? Even if it were possible to arrange matters so that Hubert Lefroy should be compelled to go away for a while, the chief result of such a step would be keen disappointment to Mabel. Nor would it be very unlikely, should some suspicion of the truth be thereby excited in Mabel's mind, the natural outcome of which would be to cause her bitter sorrow, and would probably strike a death-blow at the friendship which had hitherto brought such complete pleasure to both. No. It came home to Victoria's heart that, for Mabel's sake, nothing must be done to induce Hubert Lefroy to absent himself even for a while. And the courage and self-control, which she had vainly sought to bring back at the bidding of reason, began to resume their accustomed sway under the better guidance of a tenderness which shrank from shielding self, even in the moment of its weakness, at the cost of a loved one's peace and happiness.

When she had taken this resolution she felt herself becoming calmer—*happier* it would perhaps be too much to allege of her actual state of mind, but calmer, with a resigned numb passivity higher than which not even the noblest natures can rise, in the first moments of an accepted self-sacrifice and self-effacement. And with a partially regained tranquillity came the power to reflect more effectively. Though it would be

selfish to separate Mabel and Hubert during this, perhaps, the happiest part of all their lives, it would spoil no one's pleasure were she herself to go away. The matter could be easily arranged, bearing the stamp of reality so as to excite no wonder and no suspicion—private business of her own, entirely independent of Mabel, being put forward as the excuse.

Just at this crisis in her reflections the afternoon post came in, bringing her a letter which, by one of those curious turns of circumstance that sometimes serve to settle definitely a hitherto half-formed plan, was such as might be made to do duty for the required business excuse. A faint sad smile stole across her features as, with a touch of superstition from which few of us are, I think, wholly free, she accepted this coincidence of the letter in token that her resolve was meant to be carried into effect.

'Mab darling,' she said, when, a few minutes later at tea-time, she rejoined Mabel and Hubert Lefroy in the garden, 'do you think you could arrange with Mrs. Lefroy for her to take you in for a bit? I find I must leave home—on some tiresome business.'

'O!' exclaimed Mabel, sounding a long note of surprise and disappointment, 'isn't that something new and sudden?'

'Not altogether; I've been expecting it,' said Victoria quietly, as she poured out three cups of tea. 'Do you think you could arrange it, dear?'

'O, easily!' replied Mabel. 'Mrs. Lefroy has been wanting me to go over there for the last month, hasn't she, Hubert? Only I told her I had treated you badly enough already, and I didn't mean to leave you again for the rest of the summer. But if *you* run

away from me, of course that alters the case. I daresay you won't mind having me, shall you, Hubert?

And she smiled merrily in his face. He smiled at her an instant in return, but made no further reply.

'You might take a note from me to your mother, mightn't you?' she said, recurring to the subject some minutes later. 'What time do you start home?'

'I ought to be going at once,' he replied, looking at his watch.

'O no, not yet,' she pleaded; 'you can walk it easily in twenty minutes.'

'I'm afraid I must, Mab,' he said. 'We've somebody coming to dine, you see, and I promised my mother to be home in good time. Would you mind writing your note at once, dear?'

'O, very well! You're in a desperate hurry, I must say,' said Mabel, pretending to pout; and she went into the house to write her note, leaving Hubert Lefroy and Mrs. Lacy alone together under the walnut-tree.

There was silence between them; not the silence which springs from a complete mutual understanding, but the silence of embarrassment. She felt as if she could not exert herself to entertain him, even if her life had depended on it. She sat still, stroking the long hair of the blue Skye terrier, till the situation became insufferable.

'Mabel is a very long time writing her note,' she said, getting up from her chair. 'I wonder what she can be about?'

She turned and moved towards the house, and Hubert Lefroy, getting up also, walked by her side over the grass. Then, just as they reached the open window, that same window through which, six weeks before, he had seen her for the first time, he suddenly stopped, and said abruptly:

'Mrs. Lacy, why, *why* have you made up your mind to go away just now?'

She was so startled by the question, and in her present unhinged frame of mind it so jarred upon her, that she turned and looked at him with an expression of anger assumed to conceal her deeper feelings, and for once in her life Victoria Lacy forgot to be courteous.

'Mr. Lefroy,' she replied, 'what can it possibly signify to you that I have made up my mind to go away just now?'

'I beg your pardon,' he answered humbly; 'I ought not to have asked.'

And at that moment Mabel appeared with her note.

V.

If you have realised at all how complete was the affection between these two friends, how unreservedly the one had poured forth her whole soul in her happiness, how tenderly and unconditionally the other had given her sympathy, then you may imagine something of what Victoria Lacy suffered in combating the conflicting claims of her heart. On the one hand she was conscious of her weakness; on the other she despised herself as mean and treacherous. Excited emotions and a sleepless night left her next morning with unstrung nerves, and in a state of unusual irritability.

'I think there is going to be a thunderstorm,' she said, in answer to Mabel's tender inquiries. 'You know, I always get a headache when there is too much electricity in the atmosphere.'

'You don't look well, my sweet, certainly, whatever it is,' said Mabel. 'Perhaps it's a good

thing you're going for a change, as you haven't been away for so long. Now I am due at the school this morning, you know ; but do let me make you comfortable on the sofa first. I'm sure a nap would do you good.'

Mabel's attentions were very tender and very thoughtful ; she pulled down the blinds, arranged the sofa-cushions, and fetched some eau de Cologne and a fan. Her tread was light, her touch soothing, her kiss soft ; and yet Victoria felt thankful when she closed the door gently behind her, and left the house.

Physical exhaustion, however, must have its way ; and Victoria was gradually losing herself in a half doze, when she was roused by a ring at the door-bell ; and before she had time to decide whether she would allow the visitor to be admitted or not, she recognised the too-familiar step of Hubert Lefroy.

He came in, as he was in the habit of coming, without any formal announcement, wished her good-morning, and sat down opposite to her, as he had done so frequently since that first time when they sat together by the open window. Yet she could not help noticing something constrained in his manner which it had never evinced formerly.

'You know it is Mabel's morning at the school,' she said, in a tone expressive of some surprise. He knew as well as she did that Mabel was out on a Wednesday morning, and he never came at that time.

'I have brought a message from my mother, to say she will be delighted for Mabel to come to us at any time, whenever you settle to go,' he replied.

'Mrs. Lefroy is very kind ; I shall probably go by the five-o'clock train this afternoon,' she

said ; 'but though you are going to have her all to yourself so soon, Mab will certainly be disappointed to find you have been here so early this morning.'

'I didn't come to see *her* this morning, Mrs. Lacy ; I came to see *you*,' he replied, in the low emphatic tone of a man who has something he means to say, and has made up his mind to say it at once. She felt then as if a sudden chill had paralysed all her faculties, so that she was unable to find an answer, while he continued, speaking rapidly and with a growing excitement. 'I ventured to ask you yesterday why you had made up your mind to leave home just now ; of course I know I had no right to ask it, but I hardly knew what I was saying at the moment. And you answered me, as you were perfectly justified in answering, what could it possibly signify to me. You were quite right ; it should not, it ought not, to signify ; and yet I only know that it *does*. O, you may think what you will of me when I have made the confession ; but since I have known you, haven't you seen that it has been to see *you* that I have come here day after day ?'

He had risen from his seat while speaking, and as he uttered these last words she involuntarily rose too. The first feeling that came to her was one of bewildered joy ; all other considerations were momentarily merged in the sudden consciousness that he loved her. Only momentarily, however ; and then conscience rose up and speedily swept away the joy with a reactionary wave of bitter anguish. Yesterday she had but known the secret of her *own* heart, she had believed herself to have done no more than give away that for which she could hope to receive no return, and

even so it had been hard to see her duty clearly. To-day she knew the secret of his heart also; she might receive as much as she would give—that for which she had longed might be hers, and yet she could not, dared not take it.

‘O no, no,’ she exclaimed wildly, ‘you do not mean it! I know you do not really—you cannot!’

Somehow, now the truth was revealed to her, she almost wished it were not so; for whatever else she might feel and know concerning Hubert Lefroy, this one fact could not be forgotten,—that he had won the love of Mabel Carr, and had pledged his love to *her*.

‘I do,’ he answered emphatically. ‘I have watched you, listened to you, talked with you; no woman has ever been to me what you have been. O, I know what you mean; I know what you’re thinking; I understand your scruples; I indorse your judgment; but the truth remains—I love you! Don’t shrink from the truth in return: you love me! For pity’s sake, don’t deny it!’

‘I never thought you knew it!’ she cried. ‘God knows I never meant to let you find it out!’

‘Could I help it?’ he replied. ‘Do you think I didn’t follow your feelings when reading aloud yesterday? Do you think I didn’t understand the meaning of your suddenly leaving home? Yes, I know my conduct must seem base and cowardly. I know how I must be branded in the eyes of the world; but I have risked it all for love of you; and *you*—you will stand by me for love’s sake, will you not, you who have nothing to risk?’

Then a sudden courage came to Victoria as she recognised the three distinct claims made to her sense of what was right. To save

him from the weakest part of his own nature, to stand to what her conscience told her was true, and to prevent, so far as it rested with her, the shattering of Mabel’s dearest hopes.

‘No,’ she said; and though her features were very white, she looked him steadily in the eyes. ‘No, it may not, it *cannot* be! Do I seem hard, unkind, inconsistent? Ah, believe me, you will judge me better by and by! Ask yourself—could I ever look Mabel in the face, could I ever take her by the hand again, if I answered you differently? So my last word to you is, *no*; and I feel I have decided rightly for us both, though you cannot guess now, perhaps you never *will* guess, what it has cost me to answer you thus.’

There was that about Victoria Lacy which stamped her decisions as absolutely irreversible. He saw that further appeal was useless; and irritated by the consciousness that he had swerved from upright conduct for no avail, possibly too by the feeling that her strength was greater than his, he suffered himself to lose his self-control.

‘You may have your own reasons for returning me such an answer,’ he said bitterly, ‘and prudence may seem to you a more commendable thing than consistency; and at least I thank you for opening my eyes before it is all too late. I feel, of course, that I have lost even your good esteem, which I might have kept; yet I should *never* have gone so far had you not led me on. If I had not thought you saw to what my fate was tending, do you think I would have come here this morning to say what I have said? But your last words yesterday were a direct encouragement to me to come. Yes, Mrs. Lacy, I have been base, cowardly, selfish,

cruel, anything you will,—very mad and reckless, I don't deny; but that it has come to *this* has been your doing, and yours only!

And with no other form of parting he turned and left the room.

Victoria let him go with no spirit to confront his cruel charge, no heart to bid him acknowledge his error. She remained standing, dumb and motionless, utterly worn out, feeling in those few moments as if she had lived a lifetime, as if everything for her were ended now. She had crushed out her feelings at a cost to herself which he probably would never rightly estimate; and he had gone out from her presence with injustice on his lips and anger in his heart. One thing only remained,—the consciousness that she had acted loyally by her friend. Mabel at least was happy.

She drew aside the window-blinds, thinking that the sunshine and the bright beauty of the flowers might do her some good; and then she was aware of Mabel standing on the gravel walk beside the window, with wide-open angry eyes, and such an expression on lips and brow as she had never confronted Victoria Lacy with before. Thus they stood, face to face, for one half minute, the most miserable half minute I think that either of them had ever spent, till Mabel broke forth with the vehement question:

'Who was that speaking to you just now?'

She knew well enough, but she chose to have an admission from Victoria's own mouth.

'Mr. Lefroy.'

'And he was speaking like that to you; you who have been calling yourself my friend, and have been welcoming him here—only for your own ends! And I trusted you all the while, trusted you as

one woman should *never* trust another! O Victoria, Victoria, I never, never could have believed it of you!'

She paused an instant, catching her breath with a sob she could not repress, then burst forth again:

'I heard what he said—that he had been mad and reckless, but that *you* had led him on; that your words yesterday had encouraged him to come, that it was *your* doing it had come to this! And you never replied a word! I listened to hear if you would tell him he was unjust; but you didn't, you couldn't, you didn't dare! Nothing—no, nothing can ever make me believe that *he* has been wilfully faithless; it was a mad mistake on his part; there's no one in the world can make herself more attractive than *you* when you choose. But I wish I could feel as I used towards you; yes, I *do* wish it with all my heart!'

There were tears in Mabel's deep-blue eyes as she gazed with an expression that seemed to implore some assurance that she was judging wrongly. For where love and high admiration and firm belief have once existed it is a bitter thing to see them broken at a blow; that they could ever have been makes it all the harder to realise that they can ever cease to be. Yet with no further knowledge of the actual facts than had been conveyed to her by overhearing Hubert Lefroy's parting words, Mabel's reproaches were perfectly justifiable. Either her friend or her lover had cruelly wronged her; she had to decide which of the two would be the more likely under the circumstances deliberately to fail in faith to *her*; and she decided as was but natural, all things considered.

It was evident to Victoria that Mabel had only overheard the conclusion of the painful scene

between herself and Hubert Lefroy, and her first impulse was to tell Mabel the whole truth. The next instant, however, she checked the impulse. Conscious that her heart had gone out of her own keeping, all unwittingly though it had been, she felt the explanation would be hard to make clearly. And then she could only establish her own justification at Hubert Lefroy's expense. No ; it was better that she herself should be cruelly misjudged than that his weakness should be exposed, better that Mabel should condemn her friend than that she should learn from her the whole truth concerning the man she loved.

Mabel paused a moment ; she expected at least some excuse ; perhaps she felt herself entitled to be answered by some word of remorse ; but no such word came. An intense effort at self-control gave to Victoria's features an expression which Mabel misconstrued into one of stubborn pride ; the stronger nature would not stoop to own itself weak and erring. A revulsion of bitter anger swept away any lingering inclination to restore peace by pardon ; and lifting her beautiful brows with the scornful trick of expression which seldom conveyed so much meaning as now, she brushed past Victoria Lacy and went upstairs. An hour or two later, when Victoria, keeping to her resolve, started on her journey, Mabel, to avoid the painfulness of the parting, was not to be found in the house.

And if the consciousness of having acted rightly is in itself some compensation for any loss, however heart-breaking, any sacrifice, however bitter, then let us hope it stood Victoria Lacy in good stead now, for surely she needed such compensation sorely enough.

VI.

FIVE years, and midsummer morning broke bright and still on the shores of one of Italy's fairest lakes. The heavens and the water were blue, and the nearer slopes were green with waving woods till they merged in the deep purple of the distant mountains. The sunlight shimmered on the waves, and gleamed on the little white *campanili* that peeped out amid the hillside foliage ; there were boats moored beneath a group of pollard willows idly rocking on the water, and from the beach came up the ceaseless clink-clink of the stonemason's hammer as he shaped the solid granite that had been hewn out of the neighbouring quarries.

It was a scene and a climate that Victoria Lacy loved above all others. Day by day the steamers came in from Ancona or from Locarno bringing fresh tourists to these sweet shores ; day by day the diligence carried a cargo of passengers away to the Simplon Pass ; but she had lingered for weeks by the Lago Maggiore, and for weeks she intended to linger on. Yet as she stood that morning on the shingly shore, watching the boats that came and went between the land and the Isola Pescatore, her thoughts were not of the woods and lake, not of the snow-capped mountains or the glistening granite quarries, nor even of the beautiful sunburnt *bambini* that gambolled half-naked in the shallow water ; they had gone back to a sweet spring morning long ago, when in a little wooded dingle Mabel Carr sat among the primroses and the violets, with the fresh moss at her feet and the birds singing in the branches overhead.

That was the last summer Victoria had seen her English home.

Could she have wandered thither now she would have found sad changes wrought by the unsparing hands of time and neglect. The pathway to that dingle was choked with briars and nettles, and her rose-garden was a wilderness. Her home had passed into the hands of those who cared for none of these things as *she* had cared.

And what of Mabel, she wondered—her Queen Mab, whose bright beauty and loving heart had been to her so precious, for whom she had suffered and had sacrificed so much?

Since that summer day five years ago when they had parted they had never once met. That it had been so had been of Victoria's doing, not of Mabel's. There were moments when Mabel's heart went back to its old belief and its old affection, when she pined for a touch of the soft light hand, for a sight of the deep dark tender eyes. In such moments she thought of Victoria as steadfast and strong and true as she had learnt to think of her once, as it was hard—at times almost impossible—to give up thinking of her still. And it was, perhaps, not the least part of Victoria's accepted self-sacrifice that she could answer Mabel's appeals with a denial. Full justice she could not and she would not do herself in Mabel's eyes; with less than full justice and the utmost truth between them, it was best they should not meet. 'I said I could live for her,' said Victoria, taking her resolve to herself, 'and so I will; but it must be by separation and in silence.'

And it was, perhaps, for the sake of another than Mabel that Victoria deemed it best to keep her presence out of her friend's home.

For Hubert Lefroy had married Mabel Carr. After his repulse

by Mrs. Lacy he went back, half in bitter remorse, half in a revulsion of genuine feeling, to more than his old allegiance; and Mabel, who worshipped with all the passion of a loyal nature, and who could not lightly dethrone her idol, pardoned him because it would have been such acute agony to have believed him really untrue, and because she did not think she could go through life without him.

Yet Victoria Lacy was not always equally brave: there were moments, as now, when a mist would gather in her eyes, and a sob tremble on her lips, and a yearning would strain at her heart that she might stand righted and trusted in the eyes of the friend she loved. For in all these years in which she had travelled, taking her share in the work, the amusements, the occupations of life—years in which she had learnt to love some, and had been beloved by many—she had never yet found one who had been to her a friend such as Mabel Carr.

She turned away from the majestic mountains and the soft sky and the lovely lake: something in the bright beauty of the morning, in the sweet languor of surrounding life, seemed out of keeping with her weary wailing mood. She left the shingly shore, crossed the dusty trodden highway, and began to ascend a narrow pathway up the wooded hillside, where the chestnut and the acacia met overhead, and the butterflies danced amid the long grass, bright with the scabious, pink and blue. Victoria toiled on, indifferent to the steep ascent and the rugged ground, thankful only for the silence and the shade.

Nor did she notice when the shadow on the pathway deepened, and the blue strips of sky twinkled no longer through the green leaves.

She did not realise that the fitful mountain climate had changed its mood, and that heavy storm-clouds were rolling up from the south, till she caught the sound of a distant thunder rumble, and heard the rain-drops pattering on the leaves and stones. She was some way from Baveno; the drops that dripped from every leaf soon made the green protection worse than useless, and she had no umbrella, only a flimsy sunshade that was soaked through in a moment. But in all her wanderings up and down this neighbourhood, she had frequented this path before, and she knew that at a short distance she might gain the shelter of a cottage-roof. Quickening her pace she soon reached a small homestead, situated in a narrow open space in the midst of the wood, and consisting of a dwelling-house with a courtyard in front of it, a few sheds for cattle, an acre or two of cultivated land, and a small orchard of mulberry-trees.

The Piedmontese peasantry are hospitable and harmless. Without any ceremony Victoria hurried into the courtyard, where she was suddenly confronted by a spectacle both curious and interesting, and which gave her something else besides herself to think about. In the centre of the courtyard stood a group of four persons: a stalwart swarthy peasant in a high hat and in his shirt-sleeves; a comely woman, evidently his wife, her head uncovered according to the custom of the place and the people; a girl of about twelve or thirteen; and a small, dark, cropped-haired creature, whether boy or girl it was difficult to determine, clad in a shapeless garment that looked as if it had been manufactured out of an old sack. This family group were clustered round a little fair-haired

boy, who, mounted on a donkey, was roaring with all the force of a lusty pair of lungs. The child's dress was not that of a peasant; his appearance rather English than Italian. Victoria's first idea was that she must suddenly have lighted on some malpractices carried on in the seclusion of the wood; but a rapid explanation on the part of the comely *contadina*, with whom she was acquainted, soon set her straight on this point.

It appeared that 'il Signorino Inglese' had been brought thither for shelter from the storm by the boy in charge of him and the donkey; and that the boy, whom the woman described as 'il mio fratello,' having returned to the hotel at Stresa to procure a cloak for the child, she and her family were vainly endeavouring to induce the small stranger to quit the saddle and to seek shelter indoors. He was clearly frightened at foreign faces and an unknown tongue; but it was a pity, she opined, that the *bambino* should get wet. Perhaps the Signora, being herself English, might be able to persuade him.

The Signora thought she might. She drew nearer, and gazed at the little fellow an instant with her soft kind eyes. He was but a baby-boy, barely four years old, with flaxen hair and large blue questioning eyes, and tiny features that would have been pretty had they not just now been quivering with terror and disfigured with tear-stains.

'O, what is the matter with my little man?' she said. The soft tones and the familiar speech checked his sobs. He began to stare, and then wailed out something which she could not understand, but in which she caught the one word 'mamma.' 'I'm sure mamma wouldn't like to see her little boy so wet,' continued

Victoria, passing her hand over the child's wet summer clothing. 'Suppose you come inside there with me; see, I'm getting wet too; you shall sit on my knee if you like, and then you'll be quite safe.'

Thus, with that trust-compelling power which was one of Victoria Lacy's peculiar characteristics, she lifted the child from the saddle and carried him into the house. He did not resist, he rather seemed to cling to her. He sat on her lap and held her dress tight with both his tiny hands, staring at her with round wondering eyes whenever she addressed a remark in Italian to the farmer and his family. When she insisted that his frock must be dried, he let her take it off without remonstrance, and watched the garment with much interest as it hung before the fire. Presently she began to take notice of the dark cropped-haired *bambino* in the sack, and he followed her lead till by degrees his tears and his shyness subsided. When, however, the boy returned with a cloak and an umbrella, and when, the storm having cleared, the donkey was once more saddled, the blue eyes filled again with tears, and he clung to Victoria's dress with the renewed tenacity of terror. She could not help wondering what were the conditions of his home-life that such a mite should be sent out for his ride with no more congenial guardianship than a Piedmontese peasant. The youth was evidently trustworthy and good-natured enough; but to this *signorino* in petticoats the attentions of a nursery-maid rather than those of a groom were surely most suitable. It hardly need his earnest appeal—'Come too!'—to make her resolve to escort him on his way back to Stresa.

'Would Charley like me to

come too?' she asked. 'O, yes; I'll come.'

And so, having taken leave of the kindly peasants, and having presented a few *soldi* to the black-eyed *bambino*, they went on their way together in very friendly fashion, she with her arm round Master Charley's waist. In the course of the walk he grew very communicative, imparting many little incidents of his personal history.

'And why is Charley out to-day with onfly Cold? Why didn't Sarah come too?' she asked.

'Cos Sarah stay wif mamma an' Sissy an' baby an' papa wot's vezzy, vezzy ill,' was the lucid explanation imparted with great gravity. Hereupon a question or two addressed to Cold, the donkey-boy, elicited the further information that the Signor Inglesse, who was ill at Stresa, in the *Hôtel des Isles Borromées*, was 'molto ammalato,' and not expected to live.

After this Victoria walked on some way in silence. Something of sadness had fallen upon her as she contrasted the child's light heedless prattle with the bereavement that might be hanging over his innocent baby-head. Both she and Cold accompanied him to the very door of the hotel at Stresa, and it was she who lifted him out of the saddle. Just at that moment a young woman appeared in the doorway to claim Master Charley, and as Victoria consigned the child to her care, with a brief explanation as to how she had met him, they looked each other curiously and fixedly in the face. Victoria fancied, and yet she was not quite sure, that she recognised in this young woman Mabel Carr's former maid, who had accompanied her mistress when she married. She gazed an instant longer till doubt became

certainly, and then with a wild heart-throb she rushed straight to her point.

'Sarah! Sarah Haines? Yes, I am sure it is! Tell me, are you still living with Mrs. Hubert Lefroy, Sarah?'

'Mrs. Lacy, m'm! Why, to be sure so it is!' was the astonished Sarah's first recognition. 'I thought I knew the face, m'm. Yes, m'm; I'm still living with Mrs. Hubert Lefroy.'

A few more questions, and Victoria learnt that Colb had spoken correctly. Hubert Lefroy was lying sick unto death. He had been out of health for some time, and had spent the winter at Cannes with his family; and now a fever had laid him low, and there was little hope for his life. It was strange, Victoria thought, that circumstances should have brought her to the very threshold of this particular affliction, this particular death. She would fain, very fain, have stood by her friend in the hour of need; she yearned, yea in her heart yearned piteously, to gaze once more into his eyes; and yet she had no right.

'Sarah,' she said quietly, 'if Mrs. Lefroy *should* ask any question, you may tell her *who* it was brought Charley home to-day.'

She stooped and kissed the little boy with a fervour warranted by something more than their short acquaintance; then she turned away, leaving a message with Colb to bring her word if any change should occur in the dying man's condition.

That same evening he brought this message, 'Il Signor Inglese è morto.'

She waited a few days—waited till the quiet funeral had wound its way up the hillside to the burial-ground under the shadow

of the beautiful little basilica that English benevolence and bounty has erected there—waited till she knew that the body of Hubert Lefroy had been laid to rest among the chestnuts and the acacias. Then she paid a visit to the grave, placed a wreath of flowers upon the freshly-turned sod, and walked away towards Stresa. What would be the upshot of her visit there she knew not, but at least she might inquire after the widow and orphans.

She strolled first into the hotel-garden, and there she found three tiny black-frocked beings, Mabel's fatherless babies, with Sarah watching over their prattle and their play. It would have been a pathetic sight even to a stranger; it brought the tears into Victoria Lacy's eyes. Yet it was less of the children than of their mother that she was thinking then; and it was to learn tidings of *her* that she accosted Sarah.

'You wouldn't like to go and see her, m'm, I suppose?' said Sarah doubtfully, after she had answered the inquiries made. Sarah, in common with others, had once felt the charm of Victoria's influence; she had liked and respected her, and why the two friends parted as they did was a mystery which Sarah could not account for on the supposition of Mrs. Lacy being in fault.

'To see her is the one thing I long for,' cried Victoria, her emotion now getting the better of her, 'the one thing for which I came here to-day, if only I thought she would see me.'

'See you, m'm!' rejoined Sarah warmly; 'why, she'll see you and welcome! If you had only heard the way she was in when I told her you had been and left no address! I've heard her ask for you and call out your name. Go to her, Mrs. Lacy; it

will do her all the good in the world just now.'

So Victoria went; for there was nothing to blame in her going *now*. She went by herself; she would not let any one show her the way, but she stole with her soft tread noiselessly down the long corridor, and gently knocked at the door. No answer. She turned the handle, and resolutely entered the room. It was partially darkened with green Venetian blinds, but the sun still forced its way in, shining in square patches on the uncarpeted parquet. At first Victoria thought the room unoccupied; but a second glance showed her Mabel's fair familiar face pillowed on a sofa-cushion in the shadiest corner. She was asleep, worn out with watching and weeping, sleeping peacefully, almost heavily, unconscious of the intruder's presence, unconscious even when Victoria's soft hand pushed back the little white cap that she might get a full view of the sweet face, with all its well-known wealth of golden hair.

Yes, it was the same face; its beauty somewhat dimmed, perhaps, where the girl's gladness had vanished before the woman's woes, yet a beautiful face still, in the very curves which suffering had traced round the mobile mouth, in the very shadows with which weariness had painted the eyelids.

And what of that waking, when the blue eyes at length unclosed to meet, as if in a dream, the deep true gaze of the woman who years ago had said she could die—yea, more, could live—for her friend? As she had said, she had done. Victoria Lacy had lived in solitude and self-sacrifice to keep from her friend's fireside all bitterness and anger and strife; she had lived to be near her friend

with sympathy and love in the moment of lonely grief. But over the reuniting of these severed threads of a beautiful confidence and communion I would not linger now, lest by the sheer weakness of my words I might mar the idea of its perfect completeness. Only one sentence of that evening's converse shall be recorded here, one sentence whispered by Mabel:

'He told me all,—all the truth; he told me to seek you out, dear friend, my own friend and *his*,—to forgive you if I still thought I had anything to forgive, and to say how he had asked *your* forgiveness for the injustice of his angry words, and for all you had suffered thereby.'

They have a home together once more, these two; not the old home of the flowery dingle, but another no less fair, for they know how to bring beauty where they dwell. And the voices of Charley and his sisters ring through the house and garden, calling for 'auntie' as often as for mother, till Mabel's cheek will sometimes flush a little as she lifts her brows with their own peculiar trick of expression, and says, half in jest and half in earnest, so like the 'Queen Mab' of past years, 'They are as fond of you, dear, every bit, as they are of me.'

The old trusting love is as true as it once was, in the days when they both were younger, with an added reverence and a new tenderness for the sorrows and the losses of each. Only *one* thought is rarely spoken between them: the thought that goes back to a grave on a wooded hillside overlooking a broad blue lake, where the romance of both their lives lies buried beneath the wild white summer roses.

THE PROGRESS OF WATERING-PLACES.

A VERY amusing chapter of our social history might be written on the subject of the development of watering-places. How great and continuous has been this progress will soon become clear on the publication of the new Census returns. We limit our remarks to the watering-places of the seacoast, although the inland watering-places present a history hardly less interesting or extensive. The love of the seaside is really a matter of modern growth. The Royal Family of England greatly fostered it by their visits to Weymouth and Worthing. Otherwise English people cared little for sea-bathing or the immediate vicinity of the sea. They had not learned to appreciate and discuss the benefits of ozone and iodine. They generally left the beach to the fishermen, and built the towns a mile or two inland. Now there is an annual migration to the seaside, and towns spring up with mushroom rapidity. There are many places unfavoured by fashion which are probably quite as healthy—or more so—as any which have become renowned. We take the instances of a few whose great and recent growth are among the most striking phenomena of our time.

Among our fashionable watering-places, Bournemouth, Torquay, and Brighton may be cited as striking examples. Take the case of Bournemouth. Forty years ago there were only a few mud hovels in the lovely valley which is now crowded with splendid gardens and villas. It derives its

name from the little stream that threads the valley on its course to the clear hard sands of the seashore. The site was sheltered, the air singularly dry and mild, and pine-woods as at Archachon were supposed to have a salutary influence through their resinous perfume. Half a century ago not only was there no residence, but also there was no cultivation. A few discerning people began to build houses and cottages, and subsequently whole estates were skilfully laid out. The town has spread on every side beyond the valley of the Bourne. It has a number of palatial residences; it has a large fixed population, and draws crowds of invalids and their families from all parts of the country. Torquay, again, is another great health-resort which has risen to its present splendid proportions in the course of recent years. Torbay has always been famous for its scenic beauty, and Brixham, on its shore, is renowned as the landing-place of William of Orange. Here the Bellerophon anchored, having Napoleon Bonaparte on board. For the first time that English soil was brought before him on which he had so longed to make a descent. 'What a beautiful country!' he exclaimed. 'It reminds me of Porto Ferrajo in Italy.' I am glad to know that the family at Tor Abbey sent the fallen Emperor a present of peaches. The bay was then all alive with boats, for it was the idea of the country people that the Emperor was to be taken up to London. At this time Torquay

simply consisted of a cluster of humble houses beneath the Torre cliffs. Some naval officers left their families here; for the place was cheap, accessible, and the neighbourhood lovely. Young people could enjoy themselves to their hearts' content in the retired coves and the long avenues of lime and elm. The population mainly consisted of fishermen, who were busy in the teeming waters of the bay, and who spread out their nets on the rocks to dry in the sunshine. Macaulay has alluded to it at a still earlier period: 'The quiet shores were undisturbed by the bustle either of commerce or pleasure, and the huts of ploughmen and fishermen were thinly scattered over what is now the site of crowded marts and luxurious pavilions.' The tiny quay has expanded into a harbour. A magnificent pier has been added. The town that nestled in the valley has now climbed all the heights. The population is more than forty thousand, and it occupies a space even greater than in proportion to its population, for it is a happy peculiarity of Torquay that it presents an endless succession of villas embosomed in lawns and gardens.

Brighton has had a remarkable development. As a local writer said, 'Brighton rose like a dream on the remains of a fishing village.' Brighton had its niche in history as the place from which Charles II. made his escape after the catastrophe of Worcester. Also it had its old church of St. Nicholas, on the vane of which some have detected the delineation of a shark, which tourists declared to be emblematical of the landlady of the period. It is curious to see what the old books say of Brighton. *A Tour through Britain* says, 'Brighton Helmston, commonly called Bredhemston,

is a poor fishing town, old built, and on the very edge of the sea.' The *Magna Britannia* of 1737 says that 'the poor inhabitants were diminished to one-third, and that the town would soon be depopulated.' The poor fishermen had their huts on the beach underneath the cliffs, and these were almost periodically swept away by heavy tides. In fact nearly the whole of the old town was beneath the cliff, and the site is now covered by sands and shingle. The first stage in the history of the place was that of a mere fishing village, which seems, however, to have done a considerable business. The chance visitors who came spoke with great admiration of the fleets of mackerel and herring boats in the light of the setting sun.

An old saw said:

'This town or village of renown,
Like London Bridge, half broken down,
Few years ago was worse than Wapping,
Not fit for human soul to stop in;
But now, like to a worn-out shoe,
By patching well the place will do.'

The real founder of the fortunes of Brighton, as in the case of so many fashionable watering-places, was a physician. One Dr. Russell became a great advocate of the benefits of sea-bathing. He especially prescribed sea-water for scrofula and for glandular complaints. It is a curious fact that the British nation seems to have awakened quite late to the benefits of sea-bathing. The fishermen of course would gather to the beach and cliffs; but the towns and villages generally took care to establish themselves some miles from the shore. There is reason to believe that even tubbing is quite a modern invention. The new taste for sea-bathing became highly popular, and visitors began to arrive. In the early halcyon days we read that two sitting-rooms, two bedrooms, and a pantry could

be obtained for five shillings a week. The house which the celebrated Dr. Russell used to inhabit became the residence after his decease of the Duke of Cumberland. Hither, in his twentieth year, came on a visit George Prince of Wales, destined to become the second founder of Brighton. The Prince, while bathing, went beyond his depth, and appeared to the bystanders to be running some danger. One old tar rushed into the water after him and warned him to come back. As the Prince took no notice, Mr. Smooker seized him by the arm and turned him back to shore. He apologised by saying, 'I'm not going to let King George hang me because I let the Prince of Wales drown himself.' The Prince took it in good part, and was always kindly and generous to old Smooker. Ultimately he established himself in Brighton, and built his immense toy, the Pavilion, 'with a harem at one end and a chapel at the other.' The Brightonians seem always to have a kindly recollection of King George, and gather up all the anecdotes of kindness and generosity which relieve the selfishness and sensuality of his life. When Mr. Thackeray wished to engage the Pavilion banquetting-room for his lectures on the Four Georges, it was opportunely suggested that it was hardly etiquette to abuse a man in his own house. The town-hall was therefore taken instead. Her present gracious Majesty, at the commencement of her reign, appears to have made some effort to like the Pavilion, but settled into a preference for the quiet solitude and lawns and groves of Osborne. But though not favoured now by Royalty, Brighton continues to be fashionable, and was never more highly popular than at the pre-

sent time. Every year witnesses a large extension of its boundaries, and a considerable increment to its population.

Eastbourne is a place which for years past has been marvellously growing under my eyes. Every time I visit it the place is sensibly larger. They are steadily working away at the Esplanade, and in course of time it will reach Beachy Head. We may see what Eastbourne used to be by going to the original old-fashioned village. The people built it in a well-timbered fertile hollow, sheltered by the downs; but now there is a magnificent frontage of stately buildings facing the sea, and the town is spreading out in every direction. In winter it is a somewhat drear and deserted place; but climatologists say great things on behalf of its winter climate, the place being so situated that it has two-thirds of a circle of sea. It is a great advantage of Eastbourne that a large part of the soil is included in the princely possessions of the House of Devonshire, which gives the result that the place is nobly laid out with rare costliness and elaboration. One consequence is that no place commands higher prices for houses and apartments than Eastbourne during the summer season. It is not so very long ago that her efforts to become a fashionable watering-place would excite some amount of sympathy and amusement; but these efforts have been crowned with success, and, unless her progress should be arrested by some unlooked-for circumstances, she will be a formidable rival to Brighton and Hastings.

There is a Lancashire watering-place which is justly attaining to a large extension and great celebrity. This is Southport. In 1809 there were only thirty-eight houses and a hundred inhabitants.

At the back of the town there was a wide marsh, known as Maston Mere, which, for a hundred years, gave employment for various schemes to drain it. Moreover the sands created much waste and devastation; and it is said that a great deal of farmland had been overwhelmed. At the present time Southport has been united to the neighbouring village of Birkdale, and has become a favourite village for the Lancashire folk. The Mere has been satisfactorily drained, and now produces abundant crops. The bathing and the sea-air are exceptionally good, and the place has been called the English Montpellier. It is noted for one of those admirable institutions, the Convalescent Hospital. The pier is perhaps the longest pier in the country. Even the very sand-hills show something to admire; for there are many hundred species of native flowers, and varieties of shells, rare lizards, and butterflies. Another famous Lancashire watering-place, Blackpool, arose somewhat suddenly from very slight beginnings. It was a small village, so called from a peaty brook it possessed. The peaty brook, like some of the old streams of London, has become a sewer, and Blackpool now presents two miles of frontage to one of the freshest and roughest of seas. The population of Lancashire, at holiday season, pours itself into Southport and Blackpool.

The pursuit of health has not only raised new and splendid towns in England, but has also planted English towns, or at least semi-English towns, in various foreign regions. The French have taken Algiers, but practically the English have also annexed it as a health-resort. They have taken their flight to Madeira and the Azores; their debauches on the

Nile have peacefully invaded Egypt; and in many a foreign town they have taken the most commanding and healthy sites to build up towns of their own. On lately making a visit to Pau and to Nice, I was struck with that large and increasing English element which makes up an integral portion of these towns. Each place has several English churches with large congregations, English shops, English medical men, English banks, with some fixed and a large floating English population. Some of these Riviera watering-places have a distinctly English origin. Cannes is an example. It was the accident of an accident. Lord Brougham was going into Italy, but was stopped on what was then the Italian frontier, owing to some vexatious matter of quarantine. Lord Brougham looked around him, and thought that he might be quite as well off where he was as if he went further on.

For the abundance and vegetation of the climate was really tropical. It is called '*la petite Afrique*.' The country abounded with olive-woods, vineyards, and groves of oranges and citrons. The country had a glory of wild-flowers such as are only found at home in our conservatories. Date-palms, cacti, aloes, agaves, abounded in absolute wealth. The climate was bright, equable, and serene. Since Lord Brougham's time the eucalyptus has been also introduced, and the dry fertile soil brings it rapidly to a great size. Lord Brougham informed the world that there was such a place as Cannes. Since his time it has rapidly increased, and was never more prosperous than at the present season. It belongs to the English by the right both of discovery and occupation. There is no place more familiar than the

Villa Brougham in its orange-garden, with its Doric portico and a baronial coat of arms in front. Lord Brougham died here, and was buried in the cemetery, the spot being marked by a tall plain granite cross. Since that time one spot after another has been discovered, colonised, developed by the English, and the pulmonary sufferers of all climates have followed in their wake.

The genesis of such places and their rapid growth is easily described. Some tourist is struck by the beauties and capabilities of a spot, the open sea, the background of mountains, the gardens and terraces, the secluded position, and the cheapness and freshness of things. He settles down in his new winter home, he sings its praises, he gathers his friends around him. The place is soon colonised. Supplies can easily be drawn from Nice on the west, or Genoa on the east. There is always

good fish in the sea and game on the mountains. Comes the clergyman, whose constitution has perhaps been broken down by overwork, and he gathers a tiny congregation, whose offertories enable him to prolong his absence from home. Comes the doctor, whose medical science has warned him of those admonitory symptoms which tell him that he must avoid the rigours of an English winter. The parson and the doctor are the two great elements that help to form and mould the infant society. Those individuals are found, who, with a happy combination of private enterprise and public spirit, start the *pension* or the hotel. Other industries and occupations speedily follow. The splendid villa multiplies. The railway company makes a station. And in this way we have almost before our eyes the sudden making of a fashionable watering-place.

THE LADY-KILLER-IN-CHIEF.

CHAPTER I.

'Most awfully shabby,' said Dorothy St. George calmly; 'but then, since I have not another, what am I to do? I am not a spider, therefore I cannot evolve a new gown out of my own inner consciousness.'

'Let me give you a gown—two gowns,' pleaded Jack Sinclair, flushing a little under the girl's steady gaze, yet looking very handsome and soldierly in the brilliant June sunshine.

'My good Jack,' returned Miss St. George quietly, 'have you sufficient money to pay your debts?'

'No,' he admitted unwillingly.

'Then how can you afford to buy me gowns? And how can you imagine for one moment that I should take them, if you could?'

'If you loved me—' he began.

'My good Jack,' said the girl again gravely, lifting her azure eyes leisurely to his, 'it seems to me that you are a great deal too well assured of the state of my feelings. Some people, you know, have a habit of counting their chickens before they are hatched.'

'O Dolly, you do love me!' he cried.

'Perhaps just a little,' half indifferently; 'certainly not enough to let you buy me—*clothes!* with a sudden shamed flush at the bare idea of it.

Jack Sinclair sighed impatiently. He had no such pride himself; but then, to be sure, no cavalry officers ever have, except they are rank men. He, that very morn-

ing, had shaved himself in Broughton's room, because Broughton had just had his razors ground; he had passed on to the next room to sponge the remains of the lather off his face, because Broughton was using his sponge and basin for a like purpose; he had borrowed a collar-stud on his way back to his own quarters, because his laundress had sent his shirt home minus a button at the throat; and before he finished dressing he had lent his last clean cotton tie to Dickson, who had got two days' leave; he had surrendered his hair-brushes to Squints, who had walked in for no apparent reason—perhaps because some one was using his—and had helped Ponto out of a difficulty by the loan of a shell-jacket. Thus Jack Sinclair, accustomed to regard his belongings and those of his brother-officers as public property, could not understand why the suggestion that he should buy his *fiancée* a gown—which, goodness knows, she stood sorely in need of—need bring that shamed flush to her proud face.

'Then how will you do?' he asked at length, rather ruefully.

'Stay at home,' she laughed; then sang, in a rich mellow voice,

"Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest,
Home-keeping hearts are happiest!"

'O, I daresay!' Jack put in, very ruefully indeed. But the girl only laughed and sang on:

"For those that wander, they know not
where,
Are full of trouble and full of care:
To stay at home is best."

'But, Dolly, my darling,' he

interrupted, 'couldn't Mrs. St. George lend you a dress?'

'Mrs. St. George,' answered Dorothy, regarding him gravely, yet with laughter in her brilliant eyes, 'is possessed of *one* presentable gown besides the one you see her in every day.'

'I'm sure she would lend it to you,' cried Jack.

'It is a *moiré antique*,' said Dorothy, as if there need be nothing more said upon the subject.

'Well, what of that? I remember, the last time I was at home, my mother was wearing one, a bright-green one it was, with white-pot buttons—she said they were porcelain, but I knew better.'

'Ah!' remarked Dorothy, without much interest.

'Then you'll come to the sports to-morrow, darling?'

'*The moiré*,' returned Dorothy, 'is of the most startling rose-colour you ever saw. Why, Jack, all the women would be laughing at us!'

'Let them,' he rejoined fiercely; 'who cares?'

'I do, for one. No, Jack: some day, when we are rich, I will go to the sports; and I'll give a cup, and you shall run for it.'

'I don't see why you can't come in the gown you've got on,' he grumbled; 'it looks awfully jolly; but, all the same, he was very well aware that the garment in question was very, very shabby. It was so entirely out of keeping with its wearer. Jack thought, as he watched her that lovely June day, that he had never seen a more perfect picture than she made as she sat upon the river's bank, the willows and the turf making a background against which her radiant loveliness shone out more like a gem in a dark setting than anything else he could think of. She had taken off her hat, and the sunshine streamed down upon her golden head, giving the heavy

braids the appearance of a diadem. Jack wished passionately that he could have given her a crown of rubies and diamonds; and yet he knew that no gold would ever become her as did those imperial coils of lustrous hair, no sapphires would ever equal the beauty of her azure eyes.

And yet she was so very, very shabby; her brown-stuff gown was positively threadbare—'bright as a sixpence,' she said. One little foot was visible beneath the frill of her gown, and an inch or two of a slender ankle: they, the foot and the ankle, were all right, Jack had admired them dozens of times; but the boot which covered the foot—O, it made him absolutely shiver! Seven-and-sixpence a pair, with square toes that seemed to be of an inquiring turn! Ugh! Jack looked from them to his own patent-leather and canvas boots at thirty-five shillings a pair, and thought of the dozen or two of others which stood all in a neat row in the lowest compartment of his cupboard, and he had the grace to feel ashamed of himself. If Dorothy St. George could case her little slender feet in such boots as those and keep out of debt, why need he, a great hulking brute, with feet like potatoes, have a bootmaker's bill as long as his arm?

He looked, too, at her little hands folded idly before her, such pretty hands, with pink-tinted filbert nails; then his eyes fell upon a certain mark along the forefinger of the one which lay uppermost, and, bending down, he kissed it, as if he would fain kiss that disfiguring seam away. O, why should she have to work so hard, whilst his sisters, not half so fair, dawdled their time away, and gave dresses to their maid such as Dorothy could never afford to buy? O, why should it

be! A flush mounted to the young man's brow, and his eyes sank before the glory of hers: the question was easy to answer. He had 'sown the wind' in a long course of reckless extravagance, in the raising of his father's just anger; now he was 'reaping the whirlwind' in banishment from home, and in the pain of knowing that between Dorothy St. George and him lay a long array of debts which he had no money to pay.

And there are people who say our sins do not find us out in this world!

'O my darling,' he cried, with a sudden burst of passion, 'how I will make up to you for all this some day!'

'Some day,' she repeated wistfully, 'if, by the time you come into your kingdom, you have not repented, Jack?'

'Repented! Why?'

'You will be rich, I still poor.'

'Supposing I remained always poor and you became very rich, would you desert me, Dolly?'

'I cannot say, I am sure,' she laughed. 'I have always been so awfully poor, you see, that if I were suddenly lifted up in the world I might tiptilt my nose, even at you.'

'Ah, you don't mean that,' he said coolly.

'There's many a true word spoken in jest,' she quoted gravely.

'Then, thank God, there is no chance of it!' he cried vehemently.

'No, indeed,' with a smile half bitter, half sad. 'Do you know, Jack, that I don't know who I am? I never shall know it.'

'Yes, yes; you told me. Don't talk about it.'

'But I must talk about it; you ought to know,' she answered. 'To begin at the beginning, I must tell you my mother's name was Meredith. At sixteen she was left

to the care of her uncle, a clergyman in North Wales. Her father also had been a clergyman. She had not been many weeks at Llangwylt before she met my father, who was staying in the neighbourhood for the trout-fishing. He fell in love with her and married her; my great-uncle married them himself. After the marriage they went abroad; and one day it came out quite by chance that he had been married under a false name—George St. George. He assured her that the legality of the marriage was certain. He told her also that his reason for deceiving her was because his uncle, who had very large unentailed estates, had arranged a marriage for him; and if he heard anything of my mother would probably cut him off with but a very small property. My mother never troubled herself about it; she loved him, and she had perfect faith in him, and so a few months passed over. He seems, although quite young, being only seven-and-twenty at the time of the marriage, to have had a most passionate and unforgiving temper, as my mother found to her cost—and mine; for one day she angered him so much that he left her. I fancy she had been in a passion herself, and had cried out that she no longer loved him. Whatever it was, he never forgot it or forgave it. "You shall never see me again," he told her; "*and you shall never know who you are.*" From that day to this she has never seen him. For anything we know to the contrary he may have been a chimney-sweeper. Mother went back to Llangwylt, and I was born there; and when her uncle died six years ago we came here, to starve upon seventy pounds a year,' she broke off bitterly.

'Did she never try to find him out?'

'Uncle Meredith did; but mother was too proud.'

'What a strange story!' Jack said thoughtfully; 'and O, by Jove, what a beastly temper he must have had!'

'Ah, that's where mine comes from,' rejoined Dorothy calmly. 'Who's that, Jack?' as a boat passed them, a graceful outrigger, with a man in white flannels, who came as near to the bank as he could venture, evidently to stare at her, and who, after a salutation to Jack, sculled away and was out of sight in no time.

'That, my darling, is the handsomest man in the service,' Jack answered. 'We call him the Lady-Killer-in-Chief.'

CHAPTER II.

THE Lady-Killer-in-Chief had changed his flannels for his ordinary clothes—light-gray trousers and a coat of gray velveteen. He certainly, as he sauntered down the High-street at Blankhampton, merited the homage which was paid to his personal appearance when his brother-officers spoke of him as the handsomest man in the service. The only fault in his face was its extreme coldness: cold classic features; cold blond hair, irreproachably parted down the middle, and brushed straight away behind his ears without a hair being out of place; cold hazel eyes, large and beautiful in themselves; and a cold smile, like the flickering of a feeble winter sun over snow-topped mountains. An utterly cold manner too—which to women seemed irresistible—and perhaps the most cutting caustic wit that had ever made itself felt in the mess-room of the Blankhampton Barracks. Swagging leisurely down the High-

street he met with Dickson, who, as a matter of course, stopped.

'Where have you been?'

'I've been for a pull. The river's awfully jolly to-day, and—by the bye, Dickson'—plunging at once into the subject uppermost in his thoughts—'can you tell me who that girl is Sinclair goes about with—tall girl with golden hair?'

'I don't know her name. I believe Sinclair's going to marry her.'

'Going to marry her! Ah, is it settled?'

'I really don't know. She's a very handsome girl,' remarked Dickson carelessly.

'Uncommonly,' Montagu replied, with what, for him, was great warmth. 'And so Sinclair's serious?'

'O, quite so! adding, with a laugh, 'Has she "taken" you rather? No use; she's awfully in love with Sinclair.'

'Pooh! I'll cut him out in a week,' cried Montagu confidently.

'I don't believe she'll look at you.'

'Won't she? Well, you'll see,' and then the two men parted and went their respective ways, neither of them in the least aware that the subject of their conversation was just within the door of the shop behind them, and had heard their whole conversation, with proud scorn filling her violet eyes, and utter contempt on her imperious mouth.

Bryan Montagu did not find the task he had set himself altogether easy to accomplish, for he could not succeed in making a start. In the first place he did not know who she was, nor where she lived; and since he never met her anywhere he could not obtain an introduction. However, at last he happened to meet her with Sinclair in a shop, and asked boldly to be introduced.

Miss St. George was very gracious to him. She smiled so enchantingly that Jack straightway went off into a towering rage and scolded her all the way home, at which she laughed more heartily than he had ever heard her laugh in his life. To add to his wrath, Montagu informed him during dinner that evening that Miss St. George was really very decent-looking; 'and I believe I passed you on the river one day last week,' he ended.

'Yes, and you turned and stared at her as if she'd been some little milliner-girl,' Jack returned sulkily.

'The penalty of beauty, my dear chap,' laughed Montagu lightly. 'Now I assure you I'm so accustomed to be ogled that I should feel quite uncomfortable with people who didn't admire me.'

'Miss St. George didn't admire you, at all events,' retorted Jack, with a short laugh; 'for she said she never saw such a "screw" in her life.'

At which Bryan Montagu, who was really a very pretty oar, though, perhaps, with a slight tendency to 'screw,' was, for once, taken aback; and registered an inward vow that before many days were over he would pay Miss St. George out with interest for that unflattering remark. And pay her out, how? As he had made many another girl suffer before—broken-hearted for the cold hazel eyes which for her had been wont to have no coldness in their clear depths; for the straight-featured classic face which had made itself her heaven; for the sound of the smooth persuasive voice which would fall upon her ears never more, or, if perchance it did so, fraught only with slighting indifference more hard to bear than silence. That was the

plan Mr. Bryan Montagu marked out as Miss St. George's punishment.

Accordingly the following afternoon, instead of betaking himself to the club, or his more favourite river, he turned in the direction of the village in which Mrs. St. George's little house was; and, as luck would have it, just as he passed the Cotherstone's house he saw Miss St. George emerge from the gate of her cottage, and turn down the lane leading to the river. He followed instantly, and reached her just as she was about to pass through the little gate which opened into the River Fields.

Mr. Montagu lifted his hat with his most fascinating smile. Miss St. George blushed becomingly, and half drooped her splendid eyes. Mr. Montagu thought he had never before beheld so lovely a face. Miss St. George thought—well, she *looked* as if she found herself in Arcadia.

'You are going for a walk?' he asked.

'Well, no. I am going to sit by the edge of the river and read,' she replied.

'May I come with you and talk instead?' he asked imploringly.

'O yes, if you like,' she replied calmly, thinking what a lucky thing it was that Jack was safely out of the road, being on duty that day.

Any one who could have heard their conversation that afternoon must have laughed, even if it had been Jack Sinclair himself; they were so awfully polite, to begin with. Each seemed to be trying how fascinating he or she could be. Each seemed so desperately anxious to make the other pleased. They got along like a house on fire, which is, as every one knows, a tolerably rapid rate. In fact,

they got on so well that Mr. Montagu had already advanced as far as personal compliments, ere Miss St. George found out she really *must* be going home, with an emphasis on the 'must,' by which she evidently intended to convey to him the fact that only stern necessity compelled her to move at all. But they got still further before they reached the gate of Mrs. St. George's cottage; for, after a little circumlocution, she promised to meet him at the same time and place the following afternoon. All the same, she raised but very little objection before she consented, and Mr. Montagu felt he had never come across a cherry so ripe and ready to fall into his mouth.

'Hollo, Sinclair!' he called out to Jack, whom he met in the square. 'Down in the mouth, eh? Ah, it's an awful nuisance not being able to get out of the square, isn't it? Particularly when there's a nice young woman half a mile off waiting for you. And she *did* look so nice this afternoon.'

The hot anger leapt into Jack Sinclair's gray eyes, but his heart grew cold as lead within him, for he had never felt very sure of Dorothy; and if Montagu made up his mind to go in for her, he knew well enough that he would spare no pains to accomplish the desirable attainment of putting his (Jack's, that is) nose out of joint.

'How do you know?' he growled.

'Because she has been with me for the last three hours,' Montagu returned coolly.

'I don't believe it!' poor Jack thundered; but all the same he felt from the other's manner that it was true.

'Just as you like, of course, my dear chap,' said Montagu carelessly; 'but go along the path

leading through the River Fields to-morrow afternoon between three and four, and you will see for yourself.'

Sinclair turned away without answering, for Montagu's quiet manner had left him without hope. Of course the following afternoon he went, and saw for himself that his comrade had spoken truly. There, just visible about the river's bank, was Dorothy's hatless golden head, and in suspicious nearness to it Montagu's sleek blond *caput*; and whilst he stood there watching and half hidden by the hedge, her merry laugh rang out upon the still summer air in a peal which reëchoed in Jack's heart like the death-knell of all his dearest hopes. O, he was reaping the whirlwind, and no mistake about it!

'Now did you do as I advised?' Montagu asked him at mess that night, in a tone of sneering triumph. 'Are you convinced?'

'Hang you!' cried poor Jack passionately.

'By no means,' returned Montagu calmly, going on with his dinner as if that was the chief object of his existence. 'You shouldn't allow yourself to fly into such transports of rage, my dear chap; it's not good form, to begin with; it's bad for the digestion—bad every way. You're a deuced good fellow, Sinclair; but you go into everything with such terrible earnestness. It spoils you, my dear fellow; and it will be getting you into trouble one of these days, take my word for it.'

But during the weeks which followed, Jack's rage had time enough to cool. As far as Dorothy was concerned, he had resigned in favour of Bryan Montagu, who had contrived to get the *entrée* to the house, and who pretty nearly lived there. Twice

Dorothy had written to know why he kept away, and to ask him to come; and both times he had sent a formal reply, declining the invitation. He scarcely went outside the barracks, and when he did so, went between six and seven—a time when he knew Dorothy was very unlikely to be out.

At last, however, he was one day compelled to go into the town early in the afternoon; and about half-way down the High-street he saw Dorothy and Montagu coming on the same side of the street. They were close upon him before he perceived them, but he did not hesitate a moment. He turned sharply to the right, and crossed over to the other side without so much as a look, and without any recognition whatever. Dorothy turned very white, but she kept a brave front to the world, and laughed it off as usual. Montagu tackled Jack upon the subject that evening.

‘Now I tell you what it is, Sinclair,’ he said, leaning back in his chair, and surveying Jack with much amusement in his eyes, ‘your behaviour is what I call uncommonly shabby. Blow hot, blow cold, you know.’

‘Mind your own business,’ returned Jack sulkily.

‘Ah, conscience touching you up a bit, eh? Well, it’s what you must expect, whilst you behave as you’ve done lately. O Sinclair, you’ve a great deal to answer for! You’ve brought desolation into a once-happy home, grief to a once-happy heart. Of course, it’s right and proper that you should pay attention to the fair sex; their youth and beauty demand it; the honour of your regiment requires it; but you should not concentrate your attentions, my dear chap, you should not concentrate; they should be more general and less marked.’

But Jack was sulky as a bear with a sore head, and would have no argument on the subject, so Montagu was obliged to have it all to himself. Not that that had any effect on his tongue; he never let Jack rest a moment.

‘Ah, you may well look so blue,’ he would cry, ‘with such a conscience as you must have—enough to give you blue-devils for the rest of your life! Think of the young affections you have blighted, think of the irreparable injury your heartless conduct has wrought, think of the gay hearth now made desolate, the light heart which will be light no more. Look at him, gentlemen,’ appealing, after the manner of a counsel in a court of justice, to the grinning officers round about—‘look at the depraved individual who stands before you, the male flirt. Ah, well, well, Sinclair, of all my sins, and they are many, I do not carry on my conscience the shameful weight of young fresh affections trifled with, won and thrown aside.’

Poor Jack! he met Dorothy often enough now. Dorothy always alone, with no Bryan Montagu in attendance, but with, O, such a blanched face, such a world of woe in the azure eyes, that if Jack had wished for revenge there it was. But Jack wished for nothing of the kind. The sight of his false love’s white face only made him miserable, so utterly miserable that he could have fallen down upon his knees in the very street, and prayed her to try and look happier; he could have choked the very life out of Montagu as he sat sneering and jibing at the mess-table, only that would not give him back to Dorothy, or take away that piteous woe from her face. And then Montagu took his long leave, and Dorothy grew whiter and whiter, until at length

he missed her altogether, and feared she must be ill.

Once or twice he felt half inclined to ignore the past and go and see her, but the remembrance that she was fretting for Montagu kept him back; she wanted Montagu, and Jack Sinclair would be of no use; and so when his turn came for long leave he went away, sore at heart, as was ever Dorothy St. George, with hers breaking for the love of the man who bore the nickname of the Lady-Killer-in-Chief.

CHAPTER III.

THE Cuirassiers had left Blankhampton for Colchester, *en route* for India, and Dorothy St. George had seen nothing more of her two lovers since the day that Jack Sinclair went away on long leave. True, Bryan Montagu had called twice; but Dorothy had not seen him, being indisposed—otherwise lying on her bed in the exhaustion which usually comes after violent weeping. Mr. Montagu had stayed half an hour each time, talking serenely with Mrs. St. George, and left, with graceful regrets that Miss St. George was not well enough to see him; and that had been all, that was the end. And yet she could not forget the past; she was not allowed to go out of the house, for a terrible cough had taken hold of her; she could not rest anywhere: she thought herself that she was going mad. As the year drew to a close, and the day fixed for the embarkation of the regiment drew near, she persuaded her mother to take a daily paper that she might see the latest, and indeed last, intelligence of them. She was not hard to persuade, for a great dread had come over her, lest her child, who was all she had in the world, should be taken from

her; and so for a time the paper was left at the house daily. The news about the Cuirassiers was but scanty, and Dorothy used to fling the paper down and sigh piteously each day, hoping that the next would tell more. And at last the sight of their own name caught her eye, and she for the first time looked at the paper with an interest unconnected with the Royal regiment of Cuirassiers.

'If this should meet the eye of Florence Meredith, who in September 18— was married in the parish-church of Llangwylt, North Wales, by the Rev. David Meredith, to George St. George, gentleman, she is requested to communicate immediately with Messrs. Owen, Lucas, & Co., Gray's-inn-road, London, when she will hear of something to her advantage.'

Dorothy read it aloud to her mother.

'What does it mean?' she cried, thinking it might have something to do with—with—

'It is to say your father is dead,' Mrs. St. George replied, an ashen hue overspreading her face.

'And you will write?'

'At once,' she said, in a trembling voice. 'If he has relented, things may be very different for us.'

Two days passed by, and no reply came. Dorothy was wildly curious, fretfully impatient, and when on the second morning the postman passed the house, intensely disappointed.

'I believe it is a hoax,' she cried.

But it was not so. Towards noon an imperative knock resounded through the house, and the woman who had gone every day to help since Dorothy's illness ushered into the tiny sitting-room a small grave gentleman, clad in black, and with an irreproachable white neckcloth.

'Mrs. St. George?' he said, with a grave bow.

'Yes,' she answered rather faintly. 'Are you—'

'My name is Lucas. May I ask if this is your daughter?'

'That is Miss St. George,' she answered haughtily: the words 'your daughter' rather angered her.

'Pardon me,' said the little old gentleman politely, 'this lady,' taking Dorothy's hand and leading her a step forward, 'is the Countess of Beurivage. You are now the Countess Dowager,' at which theatrically-told piece of news Dorothy burst out laughing, and her mother sat down and quietly fainted away.

Not only had great honour come upon them, but also great wealth. The lately deceased earl had managed, shortly before his death, to pick a violent quarrel with the heir-presumptive, and to annoy him had left a will giving an exact account of his marriage and what had taken place since, and leaving every farthing he possessed to his daughter; his wife he left unnoticed, but then, as Dorothy said, it didn't much matter. And so the sailing of the *Crocodile* passed apparently out of mind.

The romantic story of the Earl of Beurivage's marriage and the succession of the beautiful young girl to the title was naturally enough wafted into all the papers. Those containing it were handed on board the *Crocodile* at Malta, and read almost simultaneously by the two men who had known Dorothy St. George most intimately in her days of poverty.

'Think what you've missed, Sinclair,' drawled Montagu. 'Who would have thought of little St. George turning out a countess in her own right? By Jove, it almost equals a novel!'

'I suppose you'll find it worth

while to go back and marry her now?' said Jack bitterly.

'Pooh! Not I! I amused myself with her; but as for marrying—' He did not finish the sentence, for Jack flew at him like a tiger, and flung him head-foremost down the companion-ladder; whence Mr. Bryan Montagu was picked up extensively bruised, and very careful to give Jack as wide a berth as was compatible with the capabilities of the ship.

'Curse you!' Jack shouted after him. 'I don't believe she would have you at any price!' And yet it puzzled him to guess why Dorothy had acted as she did.

One week the regiment remained, after landing, at a place called Deolalee; and when they went forward to Unapore, they marched without Mr. Bryan Montagu, who returned to England by the next steamer. He had seen enough of India during these seven days, he said; but Jack Sinclair always felt, with a thrill of satisfaction, that he had something to do with his return. He had not forgotten the time, not far distant, when Bryan Montagu had talked of the delights of India with what was nothing short of rapture.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE years passed away before Jack Sinclair returned to his native shores. He did so then because he had come into his inheritance; for his father had gone into that higher region where such things as earthly riches and troubles have no place. But he died, blessing Jack to the last; and Jack had been sent for, reaching his home, alas, too late.

And so he was no longer Jack

Sinclair the dragoon, troubled with numerous debts and other difficulties, but Sinclair of Cleve, the owner of a good estate, the head of a good county family. It was perfectly astonishing how nice every one seemed to find him. The self-same people who had looked very much askance at 'that dreadfully wild fellow, Jack Sinclair,' found out that, after all, young men will be young men, and that wild-oats are best sown. Some ladies even went so far as to affirm that the wildest young men make the best husbands. *Those* were ladies with marriageable daughters.

But they angled and baited their traps for him in vain. Jack would have none of them. His mother remained the undisturbed mistress of Cleve, and his sisters declared he must have left his heart in India.

Jack said, 'Exactly so;' and then they wondered why he hadn't married her. Effie suggested that perhaps she was married already; but the more strong-minded Laura scouted that idea altogether. She was sure Jack would not be such a fool as that. No, depend upon it, Jack did not feel altogether satisfied about her. Perhaps her family was not to his liking. That the lady might be unwilling, never entered their heads. Was not Jack—Sinclair—of Cleve, with seven thousand a year?

However, their conjectures brought them no nearer to the truth, since Jack turned a deaf ear to all their hints, and invariably answered them with the same word, 'Exactly.'

'You ought to marry,' Laura told him one day.

'Exactly,' said Jack easily.

'Then why don't you?' she asked. 'I'm sure you're in love.'

'Exactly.'

To say the least of it, the answer was discouraging.

However, in love or out of it, Jack did not change his condition. He went about in the character of an eligible bachelor, and seemed to find the position a very pleasant one; at least, he certainly made no attempt to alter it. He had returned from India in the summer, and during the autumn and winter seemed as if he was trying to make up for the society he had missed during his sojourn in the East. The family at Cleve saw but little of him until Christmas, when he remained at home a whole fortnight. At the end of that time he went northwards to pay a long-promised visit at the house of a man who was in the Cuirassiers when he first joined the regiment. He had a long and cold journey, arriving about an hour before dinner. Major Holroyd went out to the door to meet him, with a thousand apologies for not having been at the station, three miles away.

'The fact was, my bailiff came in just as I was starting; and as his business was urgent—roof of a cottage tumbled in, worse luck!—why, I was obliged to go round and make some arrangements for the family until it can be attended to,' he explained.

'It really did not matter,' Jack answered. 'How is Mrs. Holroyd? O, there you are!' as he followed his host into the inner hall. 'How are you? And how's our old friend, Ethel?'

'Grown a monster,' Mrs. Holroyd laughed. 'You'll see her presently, no doubt. You'll have a cup of tea, Captain Sinclair? I remember your old weakness for it. I think you must know every one here, excepting perhaps Lady Beauvillage.'

Jack turned from a young lady who was greeting him effusively

with a great start. Yes, there she was! The one love of his life. No longer pale, no longer with that look of hunted pain in her great azure eyes; but calm, smiling, self-possessed; and sitting near to her was Bryan Montagu. Jack determined, as he held out his hand with a grave bow, that his visit at Lark's Nest would be cut short on the following day by a plea of 'urgent private affairs.'

'Then you do know her?' Mrs. Holroyd cried, seeing the friendly yet half-distant salutation.

'I used to know Captain Sinclair,' answered Lady Beaurivage distinctly, 'very well indeed; but, for some reason or other, he cut me.'

'Dead as a door-nail,' Montagu affirmed.

'I cannot believe that,' cried Mrs. Holroyd emphatically.

'It is quite true,' answered Lady Beaurivage calmly; 'ask him if it is not so.'

'I won't ask you, Captain Sinclair, because I have too much faith in you to believe it,' said the hostess.

'Unfortunately, it is perfectly true,' Jack returned gravely.

'Why?' some one asked thoughtlessly.

'Why?' he repeated. 'O, you must get Lady Beaurivage to tell you that!' at which the young countess blushed so vividly crimson that every one laughed; and Mrs. Holroyd, to spare her further confusion, made a move, and carried her off to dress.

'Of course there's no truth in all that nonsense about your cutting her?' Major Holroyd asked, when he and Jack were left in possession of the hall.

'O yes, it's true enough,' Jack answered bitterly. 'If I'd known she was staying here I shouldn't have come, and as it is I think

I had better leave you to-morrow.'

'But what on earth has she done?'

'It was just this way: Lady Beaurivage was engaged to me, and jilted me—for Montagu. That's the whole story, Holroyd, and the less I see of her for the future the better.'

'Then why doesn't she marry Montagu?'

'Sure I don't know,' Jack returned forlornly.

'Because,' Major Holroyd continued, 'he has been running after her for three years, to my certain knowledge. He worships the very ground she walks on, and she always *seems* as if she detests him. To be sure, one never can tell what a woman is up to,' he ended; 'but at all events, Jack, I don't see that they need drive you away from us; you've done nothing to be ashamed of.'

'No, exactly,' Jack answered.

'Then you'll stay?'

'Yes, I'll stay,' holding out his hand and gripping his friend's hard, a display of feeling of which he repented instantly, and marched off up-stairs, wishing he hadn't made such a fool of himself. All the same Major Holroyd, standing staring reflectively into the fire, did not consider he had made a fool of himself at all.

'Queer concern that,' he muttered. 'I'll keep an eye upon them.'

So he did; but he learnt remarkably little. The intercourse between Lady Beaurivage and Mr. Montagu was exactly as it had been aforetime,—abject worship on his part, persistent snubbing on hers. Jack Sinclair kept aloof from both of them, and spent most of his time with small Ethel, a child of ten, who had been a great pet of his in the old days, before he fell in love with Dorothy

St. George, otherwise Lady Beau-
rivage—and time slipped on.

He came in one afternoon after a long day's hunting, tired and wet, having missed all the others and returned alone. Just as he reached the hall he saw Lady Beau-
rivage, with three of the children clinging about her, coming down the stairs; and as he never met her, if by any chance he could possibly avoid her, he slipped into the library, thinking they would be going on to the drawing-room. A moment later, however, the door of the library opened, and the four, not seeing the red-coated figure in one of the deep window-seats, entered and went to the other end of the room, where was the fireplace. His first impulse was to get up and go away, but he could not do that without speaking to Dorothy, and if he did so Ethel would instantly entreat him to stay; therefore he remained where he was, almost hidden by the curtain, and listened patiently while Dorothy related a long fairy tale.

'And then they were married and lived happily ever after,' said the soft voice tenderly, bringing the story to an abrupt termination.

'Well, and what then?' Dick asked eagerly; 'what then, Dolly?'

'O, nothing more than that,' she answered, with a soft laugh; 'what more would you have?'

'People are always happy when they get married,' put in Ethel wisely.

'Who told you that?' Dorothy laughed.

'Captain Sinclair said so, because this morning I told him Jinks was going to be married, and he said, "Happy Jinks!" Would you like to be married, Dolly?'

'It would quite depend,' Dorothy said guardedly.

'If it was Mr. Montagu?' Ethel suggested.

'O no, not at all!' very emphatically.

'If it was Captain Sinclair? He's very nice, you know, Dolly.'

'Is he?'

'I like Captain Sinclair best of any one I know,' Ethel returned critically; 'and he's got the prettiest dressing-case I ever saw. And he's going to buy me a watch and chain when he goes back to town,—a real one, you know; so, Dick, you may have the old one mother's keeping for me. I say, Dolly, if it was Captain Sinclair?'

'Captain Sinclair would not have me,' said Lady Beau-
rivage, with what sounded to Jack like a sigh.

'I'll ask him if you like,' Ethel cried obligingly.

'No, thank you,' with a genuine laugh.

'Tell us another story, Dolly, do,' put in Jim imploringly.

'Do you know that the bell has rung for the nursery-tea,' Lady Beau-
rivage asked, 'and that you were promised some honey?'

'I forgot. Come, Dick, Ethel, let us go,' and away the three youngsters scampered, leaving the library to the other two occupants.

'And so they got married and lived happily ever after,' said one of them, moving forward into the firelight.

Lady Beau-
rivage started violently, and jumped up from her seat.

'I did not know you were there,' she exclaimed confusedly, wondering anxiously if he had heard what Ethel said about himself.

'My little friend Ethel,' he said coolly, 'asked you if you would like to marry Montagu, and you said, "O no, not at all!" If it is not too impertinent, may I ask

why you did not give the same reply when she asked you another question ?

Lady Beurivage remained silent, and Jack continued :

'Would not the same reply have done ? And how is it you have not married Montagu ?'

'Ugh !' cried Lady Beurivage, without much dignity, but with a very large amount of expression, at which Jack laughed out aloud. It might be that the laugh gave her courage, but certain it is that she put out her two pretty hands with an imploring gesture, and faltered, 'Don't be cross with me any more, Jack !' She seemed to have parted with her dignity altogether.

A heart of adamant must have melted before those azure eyes shining through a mist of tears ;

and Jack's heart was not of an adamant quality, so far as Dorothy was concerned ; and so somehow his arms found their way round her, and the golden head was pillowed on his breast.

'What did you do it for ?' he asked after a while, without much regard for grammar.

And then she told him of the conversation she overheard, and how she had determined to pay the Lady-Killer out in his own coin, never considering that Jack would object.

'And I thought afterwards,' she stammered, 'that perhaps you only wanted an excuse to get out of it.'

'O my darling !' Jack cried reproachfully.

And so they were married, and lived happily ever afterwards.

A SEAWEED SONG.

The '*Euplectella Speciosa*,' an exquisitely beautiful marine production of the Alcyonoid family, is found in the seas surrounding the Philippine Islands, and called by the natives '*Venus's flower-basket*.'

I SAID to Eugénie, the fairest of maidens,

'I visit to-morrow my seaside retreat.

O, tell me, I prithee, what gift may I venture

On homeward returning to lay at thy feet ?'

She smiled at my question, and laughingly answered,

'It rained on St. Swithin's, so be this thy task,

To bring a barometer back from the ocean :

A handful of seaweed is all that I ask.'

I wandered all day at the foot of the sea-cliffs,

O'er sands and o'er shingle and slimy rocks green ;

Alas, all in vain, for no weed I discovered

That fit was to lay at the feet of my queen.

At nightfall dejected I threw myself sadly
 And wearily down at full length on the strand ;
 The evening was balmy, the full moon shone brightly,
 And bathed in its beams both the sea and the land.

On ocean's broad bosom a pathway of glory
 Stretched out to the junction of water and sky,
 Like Eugénie's tresses, reflecting the heavens,
 Redoubling the splendour that shone from on high.

The violet hue of the arched vault above me,
 Recalling her eyes, set my heart all aflame ;
 The lover-like waves, as they wooed the coy shingle
 With kisses and sighs, softly murmured her name.

But still I felt sad, when I thought empty-handed
 To her I'd return ; so bewailing my fate,
 I called upon Venus, fair goddess, to aid me,
 And pity to take on my woe-begone state.

Scarce breathed was the wish, when a wondrous commotion
 Arose in the midst of the glory-lit way ;
 And a fountain of gold, rising swift to the heavens,
 Dissolved all at once into jewel-like spray.

From out of the mist shone a form like Eugénie's,
 Its beauty celestial, a goddess confessed ;
 Her voice, soft and low as the sigh of a zephyr,
 In musical accents, me, awestruck, addressed :

' Behold in us, mortal, the Goddess of Beauty !
 We heard thy sad plaint, borne to us on the breeze ;
 The gift thou desirest we've torn from the coral
 That builds in the depths of the warm southern sea.

Here, take to Eugénie, the maid who possesses
 The girdle of beauty that long time was ours,
 The last of the gifts left for Venus to offer
 Her rival on earth—'tis her *basket of flowers*."

A. E. G.



'Really, too lately—quite I'

See the Venus

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THE STRANGEST JOURNEY OF MY LIFE.

I AM about to recount a story which will appear in the highest degree romantic and improbable. My readers, however, will not be slow to detect the solid basis on which this narrative reposes. It will recount the longest and the oddest journey, or series of journeys, which I ever took in my life. It will be seen also that it was a journey crowned with very happy and triumphant results.

My readers will accuse me of being a person of a peculiarly sentimental and susceptible nature. They will look upon it as a tale of unparalleled and unheard-of folly. I have too much humility of character to disavow the charge. I, however, salve my conscience through the fact that the sweetest of beings, by whom this imputation could be most effectively brought, has entirely forgiven me. Also, if there is any truth in the adage that those may laugh who win, I may venture to tell my story with a laughing heart.

There is this additional extenuation—that, at the time my story commences, I was in a weak state of health, and that my brain was the weakest part of me. I had been going abroad in the diplomatic service, for which I had a

nomination, but for which also it was necessary that I should pass a severe examination. There was no competition, to be sure, but the hardest of competitive examinations could scarcely have been more severe. Now my whole moral nature has always been thoroughly opposed to the system of competitive examinations. All my previous line of life had been opposed to it. I knew Paris and Parisian society thoroughly. I was familiarly acquainted with the chanceries of two or three embassies. I flattered myself that in all essential points I should make as good a diplomatist as any of them—much better than two or three fellows whom I could mention neither so good nor so good-looking as myself.

Nevertheless, there was a frightful quantity of work to be done: international or public law, all modern history, all the treaties of all the countries, not to mention languages and literature. Now I had always been a boating, yachting, cricketing man, and to take me out of the fresh air and nail me to my books for ten hours a day was an extreme instance of cruelty to animals. The animal nature succumbed. The spirit was will-

ing, but the flesh was weak. I passed my examination, but very soon after that victorious examination I was taken ill. I got wet through one day. If my whole constitution had not been thoroughly undermined by that process of examination, as injurious as Spanish or Italian blood-letting, I should have thrown off the effects of the rain as easily as a dog or a duck. I had an attack of fever, and the fever flew to my overwrought brain, and became brain-fever. By the advice of my physicians I applied for and obtained furlough for nine months. I wanted rest and change of scene, so they said, and I went down to stay a little time at Clifton, where I had friends.

I had one friend in particular, who will figure in this unvarnished narrative, and whom I beg to introduce to my readers under the somewhat imposing title of Lord George Erskine. But, bless your hearts, he was no lord at all. George Erskine was no more the son of a duke or marquis than he was the son of a gun. But his parents had the devotion of the British Philistine for Debrett. They hit upon a plan for making their son a lord. They adopted the queer plan of having him christened Lord George. Their ostensible reason was that their cub had expectations from a distant connection. I don't quite believe that statement. At any rate, in that case Lord George Erskine never came in for Swift's beatitude, 'Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.' Certainly, to judge by his chronic impecuniosity, Lord George had never come in for anything good. But we called him the noble lord, the peer, the baron, the right honourable, and so on, at all which terms poor Erskine was greatly flattered. If anybody

was taken in and called him 'my lord' his face was perfectly funny from delight. If he was spoken of as an esquire, he would explain that every lord by courtesy was only an esquire legally. We all had our little joke at him. He had thought fit to attach himself to me, to say the truth, in a somewhat parasitic manner. I had not his advantages of social rank; but then I had the vulgarian advantage of a good deal of ready money. When I state that my official salary from a grateful country would be 150*l.* per annum, and that would not begin until I commenced my duties as an *attaché*, and that it would be necessary to spend a good many hundreds in order to carry out the idea of the office, it will be seen that it was really necessary that I should have a good deal of money. Erskine was a capital fellow to fetch and carry. I never met any poodle who did it better. He had no serious aims and interests in life, but had taken it into his head to hold quite a doggy attachment towards me. If he found me out he would stand like a terrier outside the door of my Oxford rooms until such time as I should return. I think he was alive to his own interests, but I am also convinced that he had mine at heart as well. I had invited him to come and be my guest for a month or six weeks' holiday. Of course I should pay all his bills, and had also tipped him a cheque.

There are certain mental and spiritual states closely dependent upon bodily states. As people say, I was as weak as a rat. Of course there is all the difference in the world between getting well and getting ill; but as there is an equinox in spring and autumn, so there is an exact parallel of bodily condition in the periods of disease and convalescence. My illness had

been very serious, and I gathered health but slowly. I was weak, if you will, mentally as well as physically. I could not read a noble passage in a book but my eyes filled with tears. I could not even read of an accident in the newspapers but I realised it in a morbid fashion. I found myself endeavouring to write long loving letters to my friends, but failed to finish them, and commenced one or two sonnets, but did not possess sufficient intellectual energy to turn them off with the true Italian correctness. But I seemed to hear every sound with preternatural acuteness. My soul drank in with delight the beauty of the sunshine and shadows, of the opening flowers, of the gleaming waters. I would often have fits of long dreamy meditations. I am bound to say that George Erskine was very kind to me; he watched and knew my moods and ways, and never interfered with me unless it was for my own good. Not being strong enough to walk, I was wheeled about the downs in a bath-chair. And in the early summer those downs and cliffs were lovely indeed. I shall never forget the long arched path to the fountain, the mural walls of the tidal Avon, the suspension-bridge so lightly poised aloft, and the Leigh Woods in their abundant leafiness on the further side. I was to take steel and quinine and to be in the open air as much as possible; and though I walked and drove occasionally, the bath-chair was my usual mode of taking the air. I was especially enjoined to avoid all fatigue. So two or three hours were spent every morning on that springy turf, wandering away over the cliffs and Durdham Downs as far as Cook's Folly, and on the high-roads beyond, where past the estuary Avon I saw 'that broad water of the west' and the

blue outlines of the Welsh hills on the other side of the Severn sea.

One day my chair had been brought to a stand very near the Observatory. Thence there was a wide panoramic view over the Somersetshire hills. I had a volume of Browning in my hands, but my thoughts had wandered from my book as I watched the landscape, and the sense of the greatness and awe and mystery of things gathered moodily about my soul.

And there came up the little path a young lady leaning on the arm of an elderly gentleman.

A glance was cast at me. Indeed, I had all the appearance of an invalid, although the tide of health was returning, as surely as at that very moment hundreds of feet below there was a slight stir on the muddy stagnant waters of the Avon, which prophesied that they would soon fill their urn within those western hills.

The glance which I obtained revealed to me one of the sweetest and fairest of faces. I do not know whether it was just the beauty of the face, though I have now learned to look on it as the most beautiful of all faces; but there was something so spiritual and kind in the look, so courteous and graceful, such sapphire eyes, such dignity and womanliness of feature, that I felt as if all the strength and sweetness of the coming summer were gathered in full affluence around me. The magic touch of a new-born feeling concealed the fountains of life, and I felt a rush of new emotion and power throughout my being.

They rapidly descended the path, and I suppose the old gentleman, since he could no longer see me, forgot that I might be able to hear; but I heard him say, 'That young man does not look

as if he were very long for this world.'

And tones were wafted back full of pity and sympathy that thrilled me to the heart.

'O, you must not say that! Poor fellow, I hope he may get over it.'

This little bit of dialogue impressed me much. I began to realise a dim fear, which I know had been entertained, that my sharp illness might prove a chronic trouble which might darken and shorten my days. But the gentle words which I had heard bore infinite balm and healing. And all my soul went out to meet that lovely face, those kindly accents. 'And if ever I do recover,' I breathed to myself, 'that angel and no other shall become my wife, if I can only win her.'

I fell into a kind of vague dream, from which I was aroused by a remark of Erskine's, that the young party wasn't half a bad-looking girl. I need hardly say that I rebuked him for his unseemly flippancy. But none the less I felt that my hour was come. I had rushed upon my destiny, I had met my fate. That much-derided event, love at first sight, had really befallen me. You might abuse such a notion, you might argue against it, you might disprove it; but there it was, an ultimate fact which you could not disprove, and which you could not get over. I never wish to deride such a fact. Indeed, why should I? I am glad that there are persons to whom such happiness comes; and I think those are to be pitied who have no such experience. To me it was a blessed experience. It came just at a time when my destiny needed to be guided into a fresh course, when such a bright and absorbing interest could save me. A new star arose on the horizon of my life.

Each morning awoke with a freshened interest in life; the opening summer, with its melodies and perfumes, seemed to harmonise with this fresh chapter of my life. My thought was, 'If I could only find her! if I could only find her!' But although I was always moving about Clifton, it seemed destined that the fair vision crossed my path no more.

One day my chair was being wheeled along the Mall at Clifton, with my faithful and noble friend, Lord George, by my side, when his lordship drew up suddenly, and made the following observation:

'By Jove, that's my pretty girl over again!'

The chairman, trained to stop when any occasion of interest turned up, came to an immediate pause.

There could be no mistake at all about the portrait. It was that of the young lady of whom I had obtained a passing glimpse on the downs. It was an excellent portrait, a real triumph of the photographer's art. But its fidelity to that passing glimpse which I had obtained was the wonderful charm of the portrait to myself. How commonplace and uninteresting seemed all the other photographs compared to this! I did not stop to consider that there might be other persons in the world to whom some other photograph might have a special attraction, and, compared with this, even this adored photograph of mine might seem commonplace and uninteresting. And yet, on second thoughts, I cannot conceive that there can be any people so thoroughly dense and unappreciative that they could not see the surpassing absolute loveliness of this peerless face.

I took Lord George's arm and strolled into the shop.

'You have some capital portraits in your window.'

'Yes, sir. We have a specialty for very correct portraits, sir. We have all the *élite* of the place, both residents and visitors. We have got the bishop of the diocese, sir. Uncommon well he takes, to be sure. When Midhat Pasha was here we took him, and uncommonly pleased he was; had never seen anything like it before.'

'Would you kindly bring out those in that pane of glass?'

A shopman handed down the photographs, and I had the delight of leisurely examining the photograph.

'And who is this?' I inquired; and I am afraid that I betrayed eagerness and anxiety in my voice and manner.

'I am sure I don't know,' answered the insensate and insensible shopman. 'Jim, do you know?' addressing a clerk or another of the assistants who was at the desk.

'We may not have the name,' said the photographer. 'They came in and was very pleased with the one that was taken, and ordered a dozen negatives. The young lady took uncommon well; and I thought it so good a photograph, that I kept one back to put it in the window. It is just possible that we might have the name in the ledger, where the dozen were to be sent.'

'You would greatly oblige me if you would refer to your books. I have a particular reason for wanting to know.'

The good-natured clerk referred to the ledger.

'I can't make quite sure, we have had so many people taken of late. I rather think that this is the one, "General Bulstrode, Clifton Down Hotel."'

There was an obvious absurdity in connecting this fair young face with a weather-beaten old general.

'Perhaps it was Mrs. Bulstrode,' said the unfeeling Erskine. 'Such

things happen, we know. December and May, and that style of thing.'

I repudiated the unworthy suggestion. My moral instinct told me that I could never have perpetrated an attachment to another man's wife.

'I suppose you could let me have this photograph,' I said, 'on my paying you your usual price?'

'O dear me, no, sir. That would be quite irregular. We just keep one, sir, supposing that our parties don't object, to put in the shop-window. Sometimes they come and ask us to take it out again. A good many people like to have their photographs sold, but others do not care for it a bit; and a respectable photographer would hardly sell it without permission.'

'I would willingly give you a couple of sovereigns for this one.'

'That is a very handsome price, sir, and I should not mind selling. At the same time the photograph is such an extremely good one, that it is really worth that, or more than that, as an advertisement to our business. But I don't mind asking the General, or asking the General to ask the lady if she will permit.'

I did not think that there was much chance of an uncompromising General's assent. And I was anxious to secure my prize at once.

'It was hardly worth while troubling the General,' I said. 'Just once in a way you might not mind departing from your rule. It is a very proper rule, no doubt; but the beauty of a rule is that it always has its exception.'

The shopman laughed and let me have the photograph; and with this treasure-trove I made my joyous exit.

That photograph was a treasure-trove to me. I really became very fond of this photograph, talked

to it a great deal, and made myself generally ridiculous over it. I knew a fellow who always travelled with his *fiancée's* photograph. 'Good-morning, my dear Ellen,' he used to say to it the first thing in the morning, and 'Good-night, sweet Ellen,' the last thing at night. He talked to the photograph so much, that he really came to believe that the only reason why the photograph did not speak to him again was because, like the celebrated parrot, it was too much occupied with thinking. I have also heard the story of a man who was ordered abroad with his regiment, and who took his wife's photograph with him. He declared on his return that he had never failed to salute the photograph; but his wife rather confounded him by exhibiting the article, which she had stealthily withdrawn from the case before his departure.

Now this photograph, I may truly aver, became my inseparable companion, and, as will be seen, accompanied me through a great variety of scenery and incident in search of its divine original. I had a horrible dread, in spite of my inner consciousness, that the original might prove—Mrs. General Bulstrode! in which case all my summer day-dreams would pass away.

My noble friend charged himself with the duty of investigating the matter. He investigated it with all the zeal of an amateur detective, and in a day or two he was able to report substantial results. I need not be under any apprehension respecting the Mrs. General Bulstrode theory. There was such a lady, oldish and very yellow, who moved about with the General on his travels from place to place; but when actually resident at any particular place, partook of as little locomotion as possible. The

young lady was named Cecilia Manning, the daughter of Mrs. General Bulstrode by a former marriage. The General and his wife had lately returned from India, and met the young lady, who had been at school and afterwards lived with an aunt. They had resolved to travel about for some time, and were going to travel in the west of England and afterwards go abroad. I really gave Erskine a great deal of credit for all the pains he had taken, and to hit upon some plan of utilising them. He had managed to find out that they were going to Torquay, and on to the Land's End.

So the time comes that we start for Torquay, a memorable journey. We are at Exeter. We enter the vast station of St. David's. There is all the confusion of a great junction. There is the rush and hurry and tramp of many passengers. Past the broad pleasant Exe; past the pleasant prospect overlooked by the cathedral towers; a glance seaward across the water to Exmouth; a glance landwards towards the towers of Powderham Castle in the embosoming woods. Then we come to what is surely the prettiest bit of railway travelling in the whole country, where the line runs directly opposite the English Channel, and the wind drives the seaspray into our faces, and the seabirds are about the carriage-windows, and we drive through tunnel after tunnel of the red sandstone. We change carriages at Newton Junction, and then, through a country of streams and gardens and rich fields and magnificent timber, we come to Torre and to Torquay.

Torquay was a very sweet region. The blue of the sea, the red of the sandstone, the green of the foliage commingled very nobly, and made up a perfect picture. I had never

been there before, and I had hardly any idea that England owned anything so beautiful. It was more like one of the Italian lakes, as beautiful in its way as Como or Lugano. I went to one of the big hotels; but then the place was full of big hotels. I thought I had better go to the very biggest of them, on the chance of finding the names I wanted on the visitors' list, or perhaps meeting these visitors themselves at the *table d'hôte*. However, I was altogether disappointed. Torquay is all up-hill or down-hill. It boasts a vehicle peculiar to itself, called a midge. A bath-chair was out of the question in this kind of country. I had a relay of midges, and scoured all the country. The time of the year was rather unpropitious to my design. In the winter people settle down in domiciles and stay a long time. But in the summer tourists come on flying visits. They only come for short periods, and get over a great extent of country. I had to study the county maps as carefully as if I had been a Prussian Uhlan, and as if the Prussians were meditating a descent on Torbay after the old fashion of William of Orange. There was so much that a tourist could do if he made his headquarters at Torquay and investigated the country. He might go backwards along the lovely combes, by which lay the road to the estuary waters of the Teign; or he might take a railway that led on to the wild region of Dartmoor and the girdle of lovely counties that surround it. Or he might take the Torbay railway to the old-fashioned town of Dartmouth, and either go up the river Dart with its Rhinelike scenery, or go through the most sequestered part of England, the Southern Hams. It will be seen that I took in the whole character of the ground, and

was carefully looking up the strategic places. But then the great point was to ascertain where the rampageous old General and his party might be located. It would be easy enough for Lord George to investigate the hotels. It was only consuming an indefinite number of brandies-and-sodas, a task to which my noble friend felt himself perfectly equal, especially when it was not done at his own expense. But all around Torquay there were innumerable villas nestled in groves and gardens, each house islanded, so to speak, in its separate domain, where Cecilia might be embowered like the Sleeping Princess in the woods, very Hesperian fruit!

I lingered a good bit of time at Torquay. Erskine and I made some charming excursions in company, and then to economise time we took separate routes. My health was progressing famously, but I was still obliged to elect the easier places. There was no difficulty in the Dart. We had a spell of lovely weather, and the little steamer was so popular and so crowded, that I thought it quite worth my while to spend two or three days going from Dartmouth to Totnes, and from Totnes to Dartmouth. I did not see the Bulstrode party, and even if I had it would have been of little use. I felt that I should not be of much use to myself without the friendly aid of my noble or ignoble friend. In the first place, I had an incurable shyness. And I was still so infirm, that even if I met them I should, by myself, be quite helpless in finding out anything about their movements. Now Erskine, if necessary, would rush among the horses' hoofs at any time. He realised the Horatian line:

'Græculus esuriens, si in cœlum jusseris, ibit.'

Actually on the Newton plat-

form, one day, we had a great opportunity and lost it. We had been running up to Dartmoor, seen the great prison where the 'unfortunate nobleman was languishing,' and had gladdened our eyes with the sight of some of the seventy dark streams that rise on the moor. We had determined to go on to the south-west, even to the seas above the lost kingdom of Lyonesse. The Flying Dutchman came rushing up.

'Take your seats, gentlemen!' cried the station-master, as we were delaying in looking up our traps.

At this moment a lovely face, the face of the lady of the photograph, was shown at the window of a first-class carriage.

Erskine, with the acumen of a generalissimo, observed that there were several vacant places in the broad-gauge carriage.

'What class, gentlemen?' said the guard.

Alas, we had only second-class tickets!

'This way, gentlemen, this way;' and we were hurried onwards to another part of the train.

I suggested, even in the hurry of the moment, that we would go first class.

'No time to change your tickets now, gentlemen. You must get in; we are twenty minutes behind time already.'

And we were literally thrust into the carriage, and in another minute the train was madly rushing forward in a frantic attempt to recover that lost twenty minutes.

I looked around me and took stock of the other occupants of the carriage. There was a nice-mannered pleasant girl in one corner of the carriage, who might have been a lady's-maid or nursery governess, and one or two people who evidently belonged to the grade of domestic servants. This

is truly said to be one of the drawbacks of second-class travelling, that you so often meet with the domestics of the first-class travellers. You have frequently much pleasanter and more refined company in the third class than you have in the second. There was a young footman, I remember, who made himself obnoxious by singing 'Champagne Charley is my name' in a ridiculous and self-asserting manner. He endeavoured, after his musical efforts, to make himself conversational to the young lady in the corner, who evidently did not belong to his party, and by no means encouraged his advances. I observed that she was occupied with reading the *Guardian*, and was much amused by observing the evident interest with which she entered into the clerical correspondence. As for myself, I was sitting in one of my dreamy 'mooning' fits, wondering how I might be able to make use of this golden opportunity, resolving to watch carefully each station where we might stop, and to stop, go on, and stop again, as the Bulstrode party might stop, go on, or stop again.

I was much amused, however, by observing how Erskine, who had secured the opposite corner, was entering into conversation with his *vis-à-vis*. It was the *Guardian* that invited on his part some decorous ecclesiastical remarks. This led to an expression from the young lady of a disapprobation of some extreme proceedings of 'them Ritualists.'

'Our General,' she said, 'doesn't hold with them; nor more do I.'

Here Erskine gave me a severe nudge with his elbow, by way of drawing my attention to the fact that he was about to develop the various tactics of social cross-examination.

And he did it very cleverly. He delicately elicited from her

that the General to whom she alluded was no other than General Bulstrode; but she exhibited some little indignation when Erskine bluntly put the question whether she was in the General's service.

'No, indeed!' she answered. She was in the service of no gentleman, except that he paid her her wages—at least, he paid it to her out of the money of her young mistress. She was own lady's-maid to Miss Manning, the General's stepdaughter. And having thus exhibited a considerable amount of volubility, Erskine gave her line enough, and his tackle and her tackle kept on harmoniously together. She was a very nice sort of girl, with few faults, except those on the surface, beyond a little amiable indiscretion as regarded her gifts of speech.

'And I suppose your General is a very great man?'

'I should think so!' said the girl. 'You should only hear of the tigers he has killed, and you should only see the beautiful shawls and the gold filigree he has brought; and his black man tells me that he has often ordered out a score of black soldiers and given them three dozen apiece before breakfast.'

'And how did your young lady like these goings on? I suppose she liked the shawls and the gold better than the sight of the triangles for flogging?'

'Bless her heart, the darling! she never clapped eyes on the old General till this day six weeks ago. She was sent home from India when her father was alive; and when her father died the missis, who had stopped in India, got married again pretty soon to the General. The young missis was at school, and as soon as she left school a twelvemonth ago I was engaged as her maid by her aunt. No, thank you. The Gen-

eral is very good in his way, but I do not call him my master.'

'And I suppose you have got a very nice young mistress?' I said; and as I said it the words of an old song came into my head:

'The fairest garden in her looks,
And in her mind the sweetest books.'

The girl almost gave me back my thought in literal prose.

'O, she is so nice! Give her a book or a picture, or a flower or a bit of music, and she is quite satisfied.'

'And where are you going to now?' asked the irrepressible Erskine.

She replied by taking her ticket out of her mouth and showing it to us. The ticket was to Plymouth; but even in these days of school-board education she did not have much of an idea where Plymouth might happen to be.

'But we don't stop there,' she exclaimed. 'We are going on to the very world's end in these parts. And when we have finished with England we shall go on to the very world's end in other parts. I said when I answered the advertisement that I had no objection to travelling. Neither I haven't.'

The train shrieked as we passed over the spider-like viaduct of Ivybridge. We come into Plymouth. Erskine knows the station well, and I do not. The maid was presently waiting very demurely on the platform, and Erskine contrived to learn that the party were going on by the West Cornwall line. There is great bustle and confusion from the change of carriages. The moment was not propitious for any kind of action. Erskine hurried me up to see the Hoe, for he said that he was sure that I would never forgive him if I came to Plymouth, and did not see that fair sight which the Admiral of the Spanish Armada so longed to possess. Being a man with ac-

quaintances everywhere, he took me into the Yacht Club, where we restaurated. Then back to the station in time for the train.

Over the Royal Albert Bridge, looking down upon the vessels far beneath us so tiny, with near and distant views of the border-lands of Cornwall and Devon; on, on we pass over a succession of bridges and viaducts that span the valleys and alight upon the hill-tops; pass small towns and smaller villages—all Cornish towns run small—pass primitive country people standing about the gates of stations, for on this line all the trains are cheap and stop everywhere. All move very slowly, for it is a somewhat perilous line, raised on wooden trestles, and no train must exceed a certain speed, and all the line has to be repeatedly surveyed every day.

'Now, old man,' exclaimed Erskine, 'I will just explain to you the geography. The doubtful point which we have to decide is whether our dear friends intend to go to Falmouth or to Penzance. Certainly they ought not to miss such a lovely harbour as Falmouth, and this is the most direct way to Helston and the Lizard country. But on the other hand, at Penzance you command the Lizard and Land's End, and can go to the Scilly Islands or to the north coast. Make yourself quite easy, I will keep a sharp look-out when we get to Truro. Perhaps our little *soubrette* may turn up again.'

Penzance, he reported to me, was our destination. For some time in the darkness of the evening our way was fitfully illuminated by the light of furnace-fires. The streams ran white with the china-works. Then over a broad expanse of tranquil water we saw at last the 'vision of Bayona and the guarded mount,' St. Michael's Mount of the St. Aubyn's, rising

aloft and beyond the lights of Penzance. Then we get to the station—the only one I knew by name, and that because I had seen it mentioned in one of Mr. Black's novels.

But it is Fortune that helps the brave, and it is the brave who deserve the fair. I made a point of wandering about the glorious headlands and beaches of West Cornwall. I congratulated myself that while I was carrying out my friend's wishes and my doctor's orders, I was also advancing my own particular schemes. Lord George assured me that I was making a great mistake in not coming faster to the winning-post, and that if I would only strike boldly I should be able to get an introduction, and to bring the introduction to a prosperous issue. But then Lord George had 'a gift of impudence' with which I could not compete, and against which I was nervously on my guard. It made me tingle with very shame, the thought of being accused of forwardness and presumption. I am afraid that I am not the sort of man to get on in the world, which made me all the more grateful for the fact that I had had 'a father before me,' who, in a sort of way, had made me very tolerably independent of the world. I must say that it was rather mortifying, when we had been to the very westernmost point of English soil, and had climbed the Logan rock, and had faced the Atlantic rollers, and had refreshed at the First and Last Inn, paying pretty highly for that unique distinction, that just as we had settled our score and called for our bags an open barouche drove up, and I caught a passing gleam of the divine original of the photograph. Erskine promptly recommended that either we should return to the rocks to make a geological investiga-

tion, or that it would be a good opportunity of making another feed, which he could always do at a moment's notice and on the slightest pretext. I waived the unconscionable proposal, and Fate speedily gave me a compensation to which I certainly felt entitled.

We had gone down from Penzance to the Lizard country. We had seen at Helston the great fresh-water lake, only separated by a bar of sand from the ocean, and had then gone southward to see the famous lighthouse, and to explore caves and coves. There is one, the loveliest of all coves, near the Lizard. I will not give its name, for this is a distinction for which there is some competition among the Lizard folk and the army of tourists and artists. One fine summer, having come up from the little inn at the Lizard on our homeward journey to Penzance, we came down to the beach. Looking landward down the cliff, along the gradual path there came a long procession of boatmen, carrying their piles of net. The scene was as complete and picturesque as a scene at the Italian Opera. The beach, closed in by cliffs, was most lovely. There were little rock-pools amid the smooth sands, each a brilliant aquarium; and scattered about were many rare and exquisite shells. A natural arch, in the path leading to the sea, set the scene as in a picture-frame. When we got down to the flooring of this famous beach we found that there was a party already there. They were taking the cove on their way to the Lizard, as we were taking it on the return journey.

Etiquette is all very well in its way, and I am a great stickler for it. Nevertheless, etiquette was made for man, and not man for etiquette. If you meet people in a lonely cove fronting the Atlantic

Ocean, you can hardly ignore their existence. I have no doubt that the General considered us an intrusion; and if he had followed the untutored dictates of his own mind, he would like to order us up for three dozen. But his wife, a pleasant good-natured woman, made some kindly remarks, and some general conversation followed, in which we compared notes on various points of the Cornish coast which we had visited. Then there was a famous cavern to be explored, involving a difficult and prolonged pull over rocks and shingle; and as the guide was carrying a big bundle of firewood for the purpose of illuminating the cavern, the General, who had not calculated on the roughness of the ground, was glad of an additional helping hand with his women-folk. As he was helping his wife, I helped the young lady. Erskine had slunk far into the rear, probably earning for himself the imputation of being an ill-conditioned and uncivil animal, to which in my interests he would heroically submit. It was a very fine cavern in its way, its wild and secret position giving it an additional mystery and charm. It had been a retreat for smugglers, and it was not impossible that parcels of silks and brandies might yet be found in its recesses. When we emerged from it at last, there was a wonderful story to be told of a Spanish galleon that had gone down in deep water at the end of the reef. One enterprising clergyman had spent an immense sum of money within recent years in employing divers to recover any of the lost bars of metal: such a discovery in the American seas had laid the foundations of the fortunes of the house of Lansdowne; but there was no luck in this venture on the Cornish coast. I remember how extraordinary rollers came in upon

the cove, and the guide said that there must be some great storm a thousand miles away at sea, of which no intimation could be gathered from the quiet smiling skies, which alone could account for the magnitude of the waves. I can assure my reader, who has never tried it, that it is a great thing to sit on the boulders of a Cornish cove, and to look out on those wide seas—'the baths of all the western stars.' The old song says, 'One, two, three, full on the shingle they break;' but each ninth wave is longest and tallest in the series, and I believe that there is some truth in the idea that each tenth wave is an exact repetition of the tenth wave previous. I am told that artists obtain the accuracy of sea-effects, or may obtain, by the study of tenth waves. You might discover, or think you discovered, the archipelago of the Scilly Isles that morning you saw the headlands of the western promontory. And if you really wish to commence the summer romance of your life under appropriate circumstances and amid glorious surroundings, what could be fairer or better than to do so on this bright summer morning in this remote corner of Cornwall? Then the very weirdness and wonder of the spot! For me at least her voice would be always associated with music of the summer sea, her aspect with the morning glory shed upon the sparkling bay.

We talked about the Arthurian stories connected with Cornwall, and of the mystic palaces and churches supposed to sleep far beneath the sea, between the mainland and the Scilly Isles. I told her that Great Britain had five thousand islets scattered around her shores. Then we spoke of northern Cornwall, of the fabled splendours of Camelot and the real

greatness of Tintagel. Then we talked of the ballads of Mr. Hawker and the idylls of Alfred Tennyson. I had a diplomatic object in all this. Nothing is more capricious and uncertain than the movements of sightseers, and I wanted to find out whether they were going to see the lions of the north coast and were returning home. Miss Manning was not very certain of their movements; they had a very few days more. And then they were going up to London, with a view of starting for the Continent.

Erskine and I had a council of war that afternoon, and by a wonderful combination of circumstances it was discovered that we also had a certain call of business to London. We had obtained no definite information, but thought we could hardly go wrong in getting to town. We resolved on going to the Great Western Hotel, where we should be on the spot, and be able to take what is sometimes called 'a minute and comprehensive survey' of all the arrival trains.

On the very morning after our arrival Erskine burst into my bedroom.

'Make haste, make haste!' he cried. 'We are off to Paris this very night!'

'Why on earth are we going to Paris?'

'Because I have found out that our friends are off to Paris. And they are going a good way beyond Paris as well.'

'Who told you that?'

'Little Annette.'

'And who's little Annette?'

'Why, her maid—Miss Manning's maid.'

'You don't mean to say that you have met the maid?'

'I do indeed. And where do you think that Miss Manning slept last night?'

'How can I tell, Erskine? I wouldn't be an ass, if I were you.'

'Why, she slept next door to you.'

'Goodness gracious!'

'It seems that on their arrival they drove away from the Paddington Station to the Charing Cross Hotel. And as they found it quite full, they came back to the Great Western Hotel; and they had the big rooms next to our own.'

'There was no sign of them in the coffee-room.'

'Of course not. They were breakfasting in their own rooms. And on the staircase I met little Annette, the same girl whom we met in the Flying Dutchman. And she says that they are going over to Paris to-night, and then either to Switzerland or the Pyrenees. Most likely to the Pyrenees.'

'Couldn't you get any more out of her?'

'Not a word. The girl was in the greatest hurry in the world. It is only a man with consummate tact and knowledge of the world that could have got so much out of her.'

He always was a conceited beast, that Lord George.

'We had better take the Charing Cross train, and cross over to Boulogne.'

'We have lost that train. Don't you think it just as possible that they may now have driven to Victoria and have gone to Dover, intending to cross to Calais?'

'Anyhow, pay the bill, and let us go.'

'But shall we have enough money?'

'I suppose we hardly shall, if we are going to the Continent, we don't know where, and we don't know for how long. I shall have to stay in Lombard-street a bit, to get bank-notes and sove-

reigns. Nothing like English bank-notes and sovereigns wherever you go. So we will take the Underground to Bishopsgate, and get on that way.'

In due time we arrived at Dover, intending to go by the Calais-Douvres next morning. But it is one thing to intend to go by the Calais-Douvres, and quite another actually to achieve the journey. The Calais-Douvres has a knack of getting indisposed every now and then, or of finding too little water in harbour; there is something or other that does not suit. At the Lord Warden we saw no sign of the people we wanted. We carefully scrutinised all the different people in the spacious coffee-room, who in their turn were eagerly scrutinising the waves and the skies, to judge of the chances of a fair passage. Of course it proved nothing that our friends were not there. They might be in private rooms; they might, after all, not have left London; they might have gone to Folkestone. No sign being visible, we thought we might wait a day. There were various people who were doing the same, because they thought they would diminish the chances of sea-sickness by going in the big twin-ship. We lounged about the town, and took a trap to see Dover Castle and Walmer Castle. Grand old places they were in their way, the very air redolent of English history. But the day after, we found ourselves on board the floating town of the Calais-Douvres. Hundreds of people, and among them no sign of the people whom we wanted. I am bound to say that the chances of sickness were very greatly diminished, a greater degree of stability being assured than I had thought possible, and altogether the voyage was very pleasant and lively. The twin vessels seemed

to typify the honoured estate of matrimony; although it seemed as if the married vessels might easily be driven asunder by a storm, which happens often enough among the bridegrooms and brides of earth.

At Calais our most obvious proceeding was to go on to Boulogne. Treasure-trove might perhaps be found in the English quarter of the Tintelleries. We went off at once to the Etablissement. One great advantage of the Etablissement is that you meet every one there who is staying at Boulogne. We roamed through all the rooms and strolled out on the beach, and Lord George made a conscientious point of dropping in at various hotels to collect information and to try his favourite combination of the *petit verre* and the *eau de seetz*. These were duly entered to me as business expenses. I really believe that a good deal is to be done in Boulogne in an ordinary way; but being disappointed in my particular object, I voted Boulogne a failure and a bore, and we took the night mail to Paris.

'And what can we do in this world of Paris, Erskine?' I asked.

It was the doubtful dawn, and I was in a pitiable state of uncertainty and indecision, assuredly the worst state in which a poor fellow can be found.

'Keep your pecker up, old man. I shall have several good cards to play, but the first and simplest is the best. We will go to Galigani's, and look at the list of visitors.'

I had not been at Paris for years. I was strangely excited, not alone by the novelty of being there once more, but also I had a vague kind of feeling that perhaps this novel quest might be fruitful at last. I felt that something was in the air, that something was going to happen.

Shall I ever forget that morning in Paris? I got out of the *remise voiture* and insisted that I would stroll about till the shops should be open. Erskine was to get rooms for us at the Hôtel Continental or the Hôtel du Louvre.

'Well, that's a foolish fad of yours, Fiennes,' said my friend. 'But keep to the Rue de Rivoli, and if you turn off to the river, come back here again, that I may pick you up somewhere in the colonnade.'

The light began to break in the east. I wandered to the Place de la Bastille, thinking of the pictured page of Carlyle. I watched the *ouvrier* go forth to his work, the signalman of that vast proletariat class that has always dominated the destiny of the gay metropolis. I went into a café, and fraternised with the blouses drinking hot coffee dashed with cognac from the glass tumblers. I leaned over the bridges, paced beneath the towers of Notre Dame, and confronted the graceful outline of the Sainte Chapelle, the sombre frontage of the Palais de Justice. A fresh breeze from the west brightened the quivering river. The pure morning sky was unstained by smoke or vapour. As soon as the baths were opened I had a plunge in the stream, and then went and sat down in the little garden by the Tour de Jacques, immortalised by the scientific experiments of Pascal. The poorer shops were all opened now; the glittering bazaar of the Palais Royal and the arched streets kept more fashionable hours. Turning in the opposite direction, I dropped in on the crowded picturesque scenes of the markets, where the business heart of Paris was already in full throb. I noticed many poor people with their baskets entering the church of St. Eustache. The sun was now somewhat violent in its heat,

and the shadow and coolness were most refreshing to me. Protestant though I was, I willingly mingled my orisons with those of the kneeling poor around me, and felt happier and more cheerful that this had been done. Then back again to the Rue de Rivoli as far as the Place de la Concorde. As I paced up and down the long historic street what mingled images strode through my excited brain! I heard the tocsin peal forth from the little church beyond the Louvre, and the firing of the first guns on the night of St. Bartholomew. Once more a mighty multitude was gathered by the Obelisk of Luxor, to witness the doom of the most unhappy and innocent of kings and queens. Once more the front ranks of the Prussian army proceeding down the Champs Elysées draw close to the historic ground. Now I see from the side gate of the Tuileries gardens Louis Philippe and his family quietly emerge and start on that farewell journey. And now by the terrace where I had once seen the Prince Imperial and his mother are the awful blackened ruins; and surely that is a vulture or eagle, bird of desolation, which has just soared from a broken cornice of the desolated palace. Amid all these revolving memories there was an undertone of mystery and gladness that told me that Cecilia and I were breathing the air of the same famous city, and that the changes and chances of life might bring me the vision and audience that I sought.

Just at the very door of Galignani's I met Erskine, whose face exhibited considerable glee.

'Just come in here,' he called out; 'I have something to show you.'

The favourite old reading-room is a thing of the past; the kind-hearted old man Galignani, who

has done so much good for the English poor in Paris, is no more; but day by day there is the visitors' list, which is subsequently transferred to the *Messenger*.

And there I read:

'Major-General Bulstrode, Hôtel Continental.

Mrs. General Bulstrode, do.

Miss Manning, do.'

'I hope to goodness, Erskine, you have taken our traps to the Continental.'

'I did, old man; but they were quite full, and said that an English party had arrived late last night and had taken the only rooms. And I should not wonder now if the Bulstrodes and their niece were the very people.'

'And what in the world are we to do?'

'I have done by accident the very next best thing, for I have gone next door. The very next door is an hotel. I ought to remember it, for the driver made me pay an extra fare for going an extra dozen yards. He said that I had commenced an extra course. We shall have them fairly under observation, and nothing need prevent us going to the *table d'hôte*.'

You may go to a *table d'hôte* at a foreign hotel—there is never any difficulty about that; but there is a difficulty, generally an impossibility, in getting near people who do not belong to your party. It may perhaps be managed, generally through the complicity of waiters; but in the present instance it was not done. Lord George on this occasion had failed either in luck or in tact. At the further end of a long table I could only just make out the lost strangers of the West of England. I opened the precious little case without which I never travelled, so that if Cecilia was far off from me in one way she was close to me in another. I was

well tired out by the night's journey and the morning's wandering in the dawn about the streets of Paris.

I waited by the door of the *salle-à-manger* until such time as the Bulstrode party should go out. Never was courtier at a *levée* or a dependent in a great man's antechamber more anxious for a smile and a greeting than I was.

The General came first. He greeted me very affably.

"Well, here we are again," as the clowns say. We seem destined to meet one another in unexpected places.

'The surface of human life,' I answered sententiously, 'is extremely small. The world is by no means so big as we think it is. You will find that the same people are always cropping up like recurring decimals.'

By this time the ladies had come up. Cecilia shook hands frankly, and Mrs. Bulstrode gave a pleasant smile.

'Sorry I can't stay to talk with you now,' said the General. 'I am going to take my womenkind to the Grand Opéra to-night, and I insist on their staying quietly in their own rooms until we go out. But I am sure to meet you again. I have noticed that if you meet people once or twice on a tour, the chances are that they will come across one another again.'

'O yes,' I answered, with a laugh. 'It is only a matter of time; we are sure to meet again. *Au revoir.*'

He little thought how literally I intended the words to come true.

Then the ladies made a graceful inclination, and I was left meditating that many a true word was spoken in jest, and quite resolved that the recurring decimal should recur at the first opportunity.

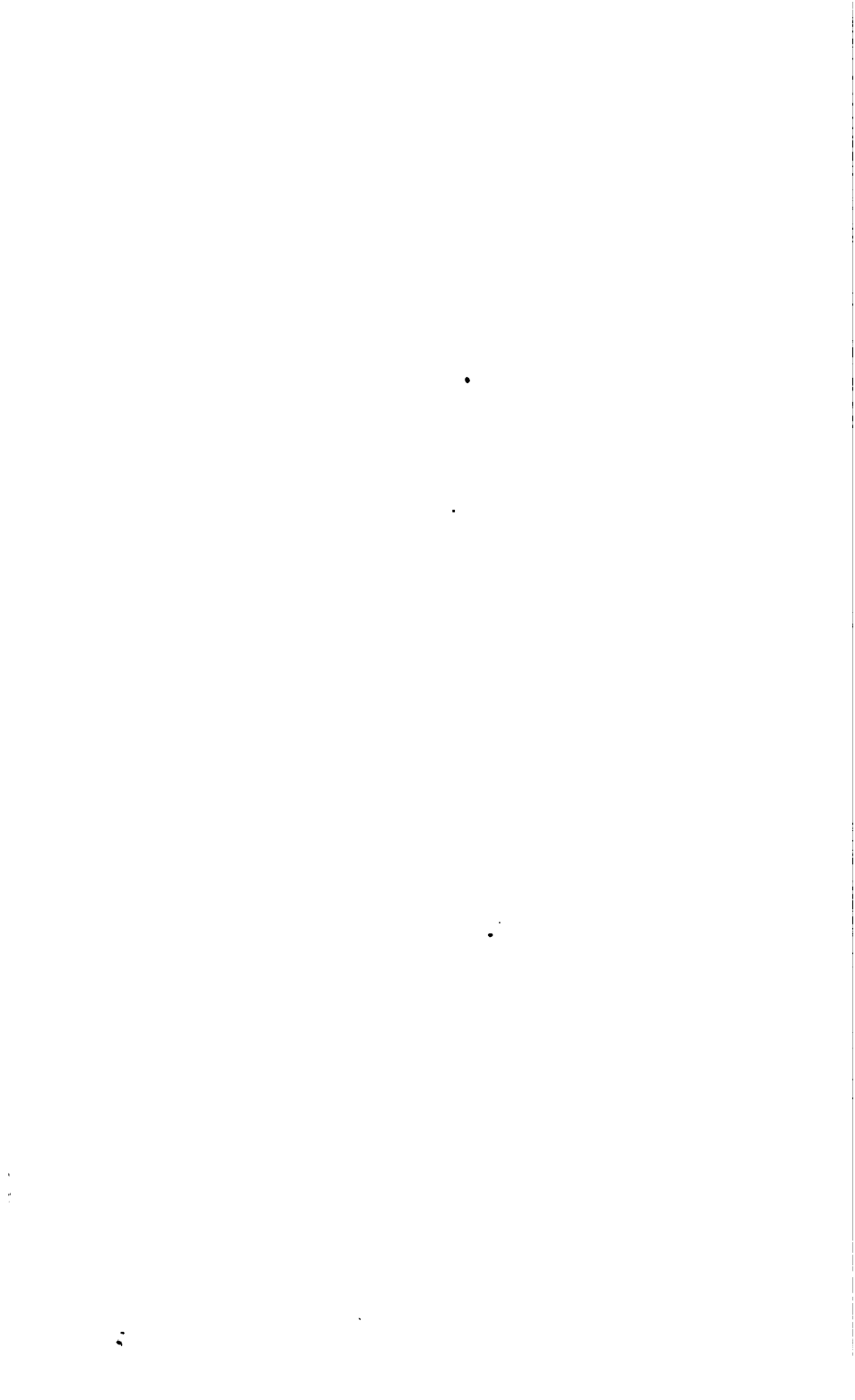
In the mean time Erskine had made rapid progress with his own immediate neighbours, so much so that he handed them his card, which was received with great *empressement*. The lady who sat next him wore a wonderful lot of diamonds, so much so that she seemed a kind of chandelier revolving on her own axis. It was great fun to hear her call Erskine 'my lord,' and offer him a seat in her box at the Opera-house. Erskine introduced us, and as the lady had no one with her but another lady who was her companion, there was room for me also in a shady retreat behind the front row. Two or three other people who had heard Erskine saluted as 'your lordship' indicated signs of that reverence and admiration which so many Britishers rejoice in conceding to the peerage. I rather felt that I was getting hold of a good thing by false pretences; but I thought that I might have a good chance of reconnoitring our friend at the Opera-house.

I was not disappointed. There was no need of a lorgnette, for our box was very near that occupied by our friends. As we strolled in the magnificent *foyer* we had an opportunity of discussing the glories of the house and the gorgeous Egyptian scenery of the opera.

Lord George made great way with his diamonded widow, whose jewelry certainly suggested the idea of great solvency. I suggested to him that he had better have things put on the square, and give no sanction to the absurd idea that he belonged to the peerage. This he promised to do, but resolved to take his own time about it. What was more to the purpose, we were able to ascertain something of the movements of the Bulstrodes, and before very



A CHASE BY SEA AND LAND.



long we had our order of march made out for us.

The information which we received was tolerably exact. We got on to Bordeaux; rejoiced in the unrivalled water frontage of this ancient city; descended into mighty cavernous depths amid myriad casks of wine; went on to Bayonne, saw the old and new cathedrals, revived our *souvenirs* of Wellington and his Peninsular army; went on to Biarritz, took some of the breezy drives along the cliffs and through the uplands, and got as far as the Spanish frontier; bathed in the sea beneath the Empress Eugénie's deserted villa. Then Erskine informed me one morning, 'from information which he had received,' to use the policeman's phrase, that we must take the train from Bayonne to Pau, where we would have to settle whether we would take the rail further on or go at once up into the mountains.

There is no English population at Pau in the summer. But few travellers can pass it by without seeing the marvellous view from the terrace and visiting the apartments of the grand historic château. Some make it a halting-place before they go up into the mountains, to Eaux Bonnes and Eaux Chaudes, and to many a lateral valley of the mountain-chain. At Pau we caught sight of the party sitting in front of one of the big fortress-like hotels, listening to music, sipping iced lemonade, and enjoying what Lord Macaulay incorrectly calls 'the long waving line of the blue Pyrenees.' The Pyrenees form not a waving line, but a serrated line. We had a pleasant talk for a few minutes. Though orthodox Protestants, they were going on a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Lourdes. There were a great lot of pilgrims going to Lourdes. Pilgrims have

made considerable advances in their modes of pilgrimage. Once they walked with hard peas in their boots; then an ingenious pilgrim hit upon the plan of boiling the peas. Now they travel in first-class railway-carriages, with plenty of wraps and abundant refreshments at the railway-stations.

Erskine, as usual, was carefully on his guard. This was much to his credit, as Mrs. Thompson of the Hôtel Continental was on her way to London, and, by a perversity of fortune, we saw more of her than of Cecilia Manning and her friends.

'Bravo, my boy!' he said; 'they are going to Pierrefitte, and that's a terminus; and you will certainly be able to run them to earth, especially if they go to Canterets.'

And I thought of Tennyson's lines written at Canterets:

'All along the valley three-and-thirty years ago.'

But instead of going up the valley to Canterets, they took the side of the other stream and went to Luz.

A fresh anxiety arose at Luz. Would they turn to the right and go to St. Sauveur, or would they turn to the left to Barèges, and thence to Bigorre, where they would once more find the railway, and might now be irrecoverably lost to our ken? Or would they go straight on, straight to Gavarnie, where, strategically speaking, we should have them in a *cul de sac*? There arose the white circling walls of cliffs and glaciers, beyond which, unless they were altogether abnormal climbers, there was hardly any chance they would penetrate; where there was the solitary hostel, and the wide loneliness of the broken valley of the Cascade.

They went to St. Sauveur, and we followed. We saw that exquisite bridge with which the Third Napoleon spanned the stream, and the church which he built for the

town. The Republic has spared the inscription on the bridge, and I should think that there would be very few Republicans at St. Sauveur. But we met the Bulstrode party returning to Luz, and I could not help blushing deeply as I took off my hat in return to their courteous recognition.

We watched them from our hotel-window at Luz. They had taken a carriage to go up the valley of the Gave of Gavarnie; and the curious point was whether they were only going for the day as excursionists, or had written to secure rooms. Erskine reported that they carried luggage, which indicated that they were going to stay for a day or two, which would be short time enough. We joyfully saw the carriage start, and then prepared ourselves for a brisk four hours' walk to Gavarnie. We were safe to run them down. We must find them as soon as the carriage-road came to an end amid the mountains.

Of all the walks in the Pyrenees commend me to the one from Luz to Gavarnie. It is a most magnificent defile to the most glorious bit of scenery in the Pyrenees. Up, up we went through the rocky path cut in the mountain's side, the dark-green river raving alone in its abyssmal fissure, now through deep woods, now crossing the trembling wooden bridge, now passing by gigantic blocks and boulders, and now getting a glance of that famous gap in the mountain-wall known as the legendary Brèche de Roland. When we had got to Gèdre, the one little inn on the line of road, we found that our friends had just had lunch and had gone on. We persevered with our walk and reached Gavarnie; and still hesitating and uncertain, we went to the river meadows, to the banks of the stream, and looked on the glaciers, on the eternal

snows, and that waterfall which is the highest in Europe. Then I came near the little inn, which then to me appeared to be nothing else than the jewel-case which held the jewel of the world. And there on a bench before the door, smoking the fragrant weed, was the burly form of General Bulstrode.

'Well, upon my soul,' said the General, 'this is most extraordinary! You really have turned up again, Mr.—Mr.—Mr.—'

'Fiennes,' I suggested, giving him my name.

'I was about to say, Mr. Fiennes, that the amount of coincidences in this poor limited planet is most extraordinary. If I did not know perfectly well to the contrary, I should say that either you were running after me, or that I was running after you.'

I assured the General, and that most conscientiously, that I certainly was not running after him.

'Fiennes, Fiennes!' he exclaimed. 'Was your father any relation to old Jack Fiennes, who was the Collector at Fyzabad?'

'The only relationship was this: my late father was the Collector at Fyzabad.'

'Of course, of course! From the very first I knew there was something in your face which I recognised and liked. Why, my boy, for four or five years your father and I were as thick as brothers; and here the General shook hands with me vigorously and repeatedly.

Emboldened by this kindness, I confessed to the General that we were not the mere combination of atoms which he had supposed; but that I had fallen in love with his stepdaughter, and had wandered over a whole section of Europe in pursuit of her.

'All the way from the Lizard to Luz?'

'Even so, sir.'

'What a fuss about a trifle!'

said the General. 'Why, my lad, you are just the man to suit her. If you have not got much money, she has got a good bit of her own. But I expect my old friend, the Collector of Fyzabad, was worth a plum.'

I acknowledged that I had no reason to complain.

'Well, my boy, try your chance with my best wishes. She is a very nice girl; but I shall be very happy to give the responsibility into another's keeping. Besides, a woman's not half a woman until she has her husband and babies.'

Under such favourable auspices I was allowed to renew my acquaintance with Cecilia Manning. The old General, whom I had chiefly dreaded, proved the kindest and most serviceable of allies. The plan of their remaining campaign was fully disclosed by him to me. They were going on to Luchon, and I was to be permitted to accompany them.

In the leafy arcades of Luchon I told my tale and pleaded my cause. Cecilia laughed at my folly, as she called it, about the photograph; she was not ill-pleased with the story of my persistent

pursuit, and she gave me the original, for which alone I would exchange the portrait.

As for my noble and right honourable friend, he succeeded in fascinating the widow, whose diamonds had so successfully fascinated him in the first place. I believe she was terribly disappointed that 'Lord George,' in the conventional sense, was no 'lord' at all. But he had not intentionally deceived her. He was in birth and breeding a gentleman, and, above all, she was very fond of him. I threw all the weight of my attachéship—and with the widow it had great weight—on to the favourable side; and I ventured to think that if they continued abroad they might yet obtain some sort of title. I predict that they will yet burst upon an astonished world as a real live baron and baroness. For myself, I often tell my wife that we had our honeymoon travels before the marriage; but, however that may be, we neither of us regret that the sweet time of wooing was spent amid the solemnities of the ocean and the mountains.

UNDER BODDAM LIGHTHOUSE.

'NELLIE, I wonder why it is that you have not married yet? I am sure it cannot be for want of offers.'

Mrs. Custance, Nellie's old friend and schoolfellow, with whose party she was staying at Peterhead, was the speaker; and had you or I been in Buchan Haven cove on this sunny summer morning, lounging with them on the sand, we should have awaited the answer with some curiosity. For none could deny that Nellie Stewart was a beautiful woman, beautiful still with the beauty of girlhood, though she only wanted three years of thirty. The two friends had been bathing, and Nellie's thick fair hair still fell in wavy masses round the small delicate face, her complexion was almost too clear; but the mobility of the features and the quick glancing mirth of the eyes redeemed her face from any reproach that might attach to it as belonging to the impassive class of beauties. Her tall supple form was seen to advantage as she half sat, half lay against the pebbly ridge, gazing across the sea at a few brown dots almost lost in the haze, which were all now visible of the receding fishing-smacks slowly making their way to the haddock-beds. For a moment or two there was silence.

'Not so many as you would suppose, Mary,' she replied, with something of bitterness in the smile which was wasted upon the distant horizon.

'Then that must be your fault,' said Mrs. Custance, keenly watching the face only half turned from her. She was anxious to obtain a knowledge of Nellie's feelings upon

a point of some present interest to another in the party as well as to herself.

'It may be so; I daresay it is. You think I have suitors always at my feet. No, Mary; shall I tell you how it is? Shall I confess? My face is pretty enough to make men wish to be introduced to me; in London my life seems in the season one long series of introductions to fresh men,—to soldiers, sailors, tinkers, and tailors,' added she laughingly, casting a stone into the sea. 'Hostesses like to have me, for I always draw at first. I look very well at a distance, and make quite a pretty picture. But men never dance with me twice; not because my "paces are bad," as Mr. Colwyn would say, but because, Mary—they don't like me.'

'Really, Nellie, you always were a ridiculous girl,' answered Mrs. Custance, not well pleased by the tone of Nellie's allusion to her other guest.

'No, it is because I too often make *them* ridiculous that they don't like me. Men are naturally so vain, my dear, that they never forgive a woman who meets them on an equality. My new partner says something foolish to me—indeed he seldom says anything else—and it hardly needs a word from me—a mere look is often enough—to send him off, to tell the first friend he meets, "Doosid odd girl that; uncomfortable sort o' girl." And he doesn't ask for another dance, Mary. I am sure to hurt their pride, and away they go. Isn't it a dreadful thing to have a sense of the ridiculous, and a mastering inclination to

use the powers of repartee nature has given us?' finished Nellie, with a comic sigh that had a plaintive reality in its depths.

'What an odd girl you are, Nellie!' said the elder woman pettishly.

'Just what my new partner says when we have had our first and only dance.'

'Well, at any rate all men are not of his opinion; some come back for a second and a third, and as many as you will give them, Nellie;' and Mrs. Custance glanced meaningly at a little boat with two rowers which had just rounded the arm of the tiny bay, and was slowly making its way towards them.

'Yes, but those who are so ready to accept the superiority of my contemptuous highness are hardly fit to become my lord and master,' said Nellie, in a lower tone. 'I do not think it better to rule in hell than serve in heaven. Mary,' with a sudden cry as she turned to the other, putting her hand in hers, 'you do not think me spiteful and ill-natured?'

Mrs. Custance saw that the eyes were brimming with tears, and hardly needed her womanly clearness to divine the warm depths that underlay the sparkling cynical surface which her clever friend opposed to the world. She knew that Nellie Stewart had gauged herself with the practical acuteness and insight, the expression of which had repelled so many would-be admirers. The girl had only put into her own words what was the general opinion of her in society.

The kindly little woman administered feminine comfort in the shape of a kiss, and, possessing the wonderful knowledge of when it is best to let well and ill alone, said nothing upon a subject which was very near her heart. She rose, and proposed that they should

stroll along the shore and meet the boat which was coming to fetch them back to Peterhead and luncheon.

If it is a far cry to Loch Awe, it certainly is a long one from London to the little fishing-town of Peterhead, in the north-east corner of Scotland. Before the herring-fishery begins, it is a pleasant place enough; the coast is in parts delightfully rugged, and where the sea is sufficiently smooth to allow of small boats approaching the base of the rocks, no more picturesque spots for water-picnics can be imagined. But it is seldom that small boats can venture outside the large harbour, the entrance to which, when there is the slightest wind, is marked by the breakers that reach from either side, and leave but a narrow passage of comparatively smooth water. To the eastward of the harbour lies the fishing-hamlet of Boddam, to the westward that of Buchan Haven; when there is any wind, a rough sea that would soon swamp any rowing craft save a lifeboat is always tumbling outside the harbour mouth. You can see the whales spouting out there; and nearer the beach, by the mouth of the little river, the salmon leap faster than you can count their splashes. But that is later in the year.

The Custances had been there a month, and would leave in a day or two to join some friends in Edinburgh. The party was not a large one, consisting only of themselves, their two children, Mrs. Custance's brother, Jack Colwyn, and her close friend, Nellie Stewart. That the party might be made smaller by the conversion of the two latter into one was the earnest desire of the pretty little woman, who was herself so happy in her husband and children and in the little nest at Brompton, to which

they would retire with less reluctance than the great majority of Londoners feel when their holiday is over. Her brother was only too anxious to fall in with her wishes; he had dogged the Stewart's footsteps through the earlier part of the season, and now he was playing attendance at Peterhead, when his natural impulses would have led him to seek some spot where the fishing was better and the society exclusively male. Jack Colwyn was a favourite with men, but until he met Nellie at his sister's house he had avoided with some care the places where the other sex congregated. Jack, in truth, was better with his fists than with his tongue, and was more quick and certain in casting a fly than in planting a repartee; but he was no fool, though a self-sufficient young lady thought him one; and though he never rose above the fifth form at Shrewsbury, he knew many things which were Abracadabra to more showy talkers. And of course Jack had never shown to advantage in the presence of his mistress. He knew the reputation for wit and sarcasm, not to say ill-nature, which Nellie Stewart had won among men of more brilliant parts than himself; but seeing so much of her in the intimacy of his sister's home, though he would writhe under her barely disguised contempt and her unconcealed sense of superiority, he dimly discerned the womanly feelings which underlay these ebullitions, and continued his eager pursuit.

'Miss Stewart, it is a long time until dinner, and my sister has issued an edict against dressing for the same. Will you let me row you out for half an hour? It is so cool now.'

'I will come with pleasure, I am sure,' cried Nellie, who had a genuine and great love of the water. 'Ted,' she added to one of

the children, 'will you fetch me my cloak?'

Now Nellie felt almost sure that Jack intended to propose to her this evening. She made a shrewd guess that her friend had been sounding her on his behalf, and had reported not altogether unfavourably. She had no thought of evading it. Jack intended going on with them to Edinburgh, and in that most picturesque of towns, what with walks to Arthur's Seat and moonlight expeditions to view the Grass-market, and the lights in the old town, his opportunity must come sooner or later. Nellie had no intention of taking him. True, she had a sneaking kind of liking for Jack in a cousinly way, and a dim sense of his good qualities; but it was as she had said,—she was too conscious of her own superiority to be able to feel for the good-natured, shy, and ordinary young fellow as her romantic nature would have her feel for her future lord and master.

Once out into the middle of the harbour, away from the slimy stone steps and the tottering curing-houses, where the perfume of last year's herrings yet lingered, and which would soon be redolent with the bouquet of this season's catch, Colwyn rested on his oars, and swinging the boat broadside to the town, they looked back at its huddled stone houses, at its streets all leading to the sea, and the market-place with its monument to Marshal Keith, the stout old Jacobite who escaped from the '15 to fight the battles of Frederick the Great, and to add one to the long list of Scottish soldiers who for half a century lent a lustre to the military annals of every nation save our own. But I doubt if either of them were thinking of any of these things.

'Will you pull us under the Boddam shore, Mr. Colwyn? We

have never gone up that side of the bay.'

For answer Jack pulled sturdily towards the eastern shore of the harbour. The tide was with him, and they were soon lying a few hundred yards from the sandhills, against which the waves were gently plashing. Then he again lay on his oars, and thinking to himself—for he was prone, I regret to say, as Nellie had hinted, to metaphors of a sporting nature—'Harden your heart and stick in your knees, old boy!' he out and spoke his mind.

'Miss Stewart,' he added, after an appeal more manly and to the purpose than the girl, who sat gazing into the depths of the water, aware that she must hear him out, had expected, 'I have known more and seen more of you than many men see or know of the girls they would marry, and I am certain that you would make me happy; and, Nellie, that my life would not be so empty with you as it has been. I do love you; let me try to make you as happy as you would make me.'

And Jack Colwyn leant forward to hear his fate in a very downright manner.

'I am sorry,' began the girl, in the stereotyped form, finding it by no means so easy to give him his answer as she had expected, for the earnestness of his appeal touched her, and her eyes were full of tears, and Jack through them looked very manly in his flannel shirt and the straightforwardness of his love; and the sun was setting too. 'No, it cannot be, Mr. Colwyn. I knew that you were going to ask me; but I could hardly prevent you. I can only say no. I do not feel towards you, and I am sure I never shall, as a girl should to the man who is to be her husband. I—I am quite sure of it: and I shall be glad if

you will not ask me again, or refer to it. Please to forget that it has happened; and—and, Mr. Colwyn, do not let us be worse friends. I should be sorry for that. I cannot do what you ask: but I have not many friends.'

And Nellie stretched out her hand to him, wilful little creature, and there were softened tones in her voice that few had heard, and the hand that she held out trembled so that his reluctant one could hardly touch it.

'Yes, I will try,' he said quietly and sadly, and looked at the end of his sculls as he turned the boat round.

'We shall be late,' said she, with an attempt at cheerfulness; 'and we have floated so far that the town is quite indistinct.'

Jack made no answer—he was busy turning the boat's head round; and a man cannot, like a woman, on these occasions at once disguise his defeat under careless talk. It was some satisfaction to him to put his strength into the pulling, to grind his feet against the stretcher, and to make the thole-pins groan with the strain put upon them, to hear the water washing round the bows with every stroke. Miss Stewart, who had command of the rudder-strings, said no more, but, letting her hand droop into the cool water, watched the ripples that streamed and widened from her white fingers. Maybe, too, from the corners of her eyes she cast a glance of feminine admiration at the broad shoulders and brown arms that were making the little boat bound so merrily. But, after a time, she looked up, and glancing at the shore, said,

'We don't seem to have gone far, when you look at the shore, do we? And yet we must have.'

Jack looked up, and with surprise—for he knew better than she did the vigour he had been throw-

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for transparency and accountability, particularly in financial matters.

2. The second part outlines the specific procedures for recording transactions. It details the steps involved in identifying, documenting, and verifying each transaction, ensuring that all relevant information is captured and stored securely.

3. The third part addresses the challenges associated with record-keeping, such as data loss, corruption, and unauthorized access. It provides strategies to mitigate these risks, including regular backups, secure storage solutions, and strict access controls.

4. The fourth part discusses the role of technology in enhancing record-keeping processes. It highlights the benefits of using digital tools and software to streamline data collection, storage, and retrieval, while also noting the importance of staying updated with the latest technological advancements.

5. The fifth part concludes by emphasizing the ongoing nature of record-keeping and the need for continuous monitoring and improvement. It encourages organizations to regularly review their record-keeping practices and make adjustments as needed to ensure they remain effective and compliant with relevant regulations.

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pain, as he contemplated the almost immediate crisis, there was no selfishness; it never occurred to him as a satisfaction that they would perish together. If he could only save her! he cared little, genuinely little, at that moment to save himself. But to see her die by his side, to see those hands struggling and that fair face working in the agony of suffocation, while the gray relentless waves rolled on and over it—that did fill his soul with an anguish that almost made him cry aloud. And he knew now, though he hardly dared to look at the white face before him, that she comprehended some part, if not all, of their peril. Yes, Nellie could not but see the white line of breakers that stretched out from the now distant shore across their path, she could not but see how swiftly they were bearing down upon them. Already the distant roar of the waves breaking over the hidden rocks came, with what muttering of threats, to the ears of those two, can well be imagined. When he gave up his attempt to scull at the stern and returned to his seat, she said,

‘Is there any hope?’

Jack was a brave man, and that quiver in the poor girl’s voice, while it wrung his heart, pulled him together.

‘Yes, there is hope, though we are in some danger. Will you wave my pocket-handkerchief on your umbrella? They may see it from the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbour, and notice where we are. No doubt they are looking out for us at the town,’ he added; ‘but we are too far away, I fear, for their help to be of much avail.’

Nellie strained her eyes across the water to where the town could dimly be discerned, and thought of the dear friends who at this

moment were probably looking towards them. The sunset tints were dying away, and the stillness of evening was over everything save the relentless breakers, whose thunder came more and more loudly on the ear.

‘Ha,’ cried Jack suddenly, ‘what an idiot I have been—the stone!’ and he hurriedly caught up from under a seat where it had lain hid the great stone which they used as an anchor when fishing. Until that moment it had been unheeded. The rope was loose, but he fastened it to the seat, and flung the stone, which was now almost their only hope, over the side with all possible speed. Down, down it went through the gray-green water, checking the boat’s progress in some degree before the rope became taut. Would it reach the bottom? and if it did, would it drag or become fixed? and would the old rope stand the strain of the current? Nellie watched him with heaving breast, one hand clutching the seat, while the other mechanically waved the signal of distress. No; Jack gave a groan as he saw that the rope was not long enough; the stone was not at the bottom; still, it very much stayed their progress. They were now being carried along at a quarter of their former speed. Yet he saw that nearly all hope was gone. There were sails in sight, but at a great distance, while the white line of foam was not three hundred yards away. He could do no more; he did not know how to say anything cheering to her. At last he told her that there was some chance yet, for nearer the breakers the water might grow more shallow, and the anchor find holding-ground. From which Nellie knew that all other hope was gone, and gave a shuddering glance at the gray waves, that more and more boisterously leapt up against the

sides of the little craft, as they had not done in the still water nearer the shore. Nearer and nearer, until the thunder of the waves falling on the sunken rocks seemed to fill the air, and the boat rocked up and down perilously. Vaguely she saw her companion writing something inside some leaves of his pocket-book, and nailing the little packet to the seat of the boat with his knife. Then he leant over towards her, where she crouched rather than sat, her eye fixed upon the waves, that struck the side with more and more violence.

'Nellie, let me take your hand. My darling,' he went on, holding the cold trembling hand firmly in his own, 'it will not be very bad. Shut your eyes, and don't watch the water.'

The girl did as she was told, and bowed her head on her knees, while Colwyn sat gazing with pale set face at the white line now close at hand. The sun had altogether gone, and it was almost dark; up above, but beyond the reef, the gleam of the lighthouse was now appearing and disappearing. So they sat a few moments waiting for the end, while the darkness gathered, and the thunder of the breakers grew louder and louder. Then Colwyn noticed that they were getting no nearer. Had the anchor caught? No. The hope died away almost as soon as conceived, and he saw that the current was carrying them no longer straight upon, but rather across the front of, the reef, and towards the centre of the mouth of the harbour. It gave them a few more minutes before the end; the struggle in the rough water might last a little longer than in the foaming surge, but the end would come, and it would be the same. He did not tell Nellie of the change. She still sat; and he clasped her hand,

trying only to comfort her by his presence, until he saw that the boat would certainly clear the reef.

'We have passed the breakers, Nellie; but we are going into the broken water. The boat must soon be swamped; yet we may cling to it for some time, and may possibly be saved yet.'

She looked up at his first words with a white quivering face; but he could not give her a look that told of hope. When she saw the white foam abreast of them, and the great rollers which raised the boat up and down like a cockleshell, and hid at times everything from them but the dim gray stretch of heaving water and the revolving light above, she shudderingly said,

'Good-bye!'

Then, with the faintest pressure of his hand, she bent her head again upon her knees.

He passed one arm round her, that they might not be parted when the boat went from under them—and then he saw that they were saved. There, there, hardly two hundred yards from them, and coming down through the gloom, looking twice its size, was a fishing-smack. The keeper of the lighthouse had observed them and their signal, and given the alarm at Boddam Harbour; the rescuing smack had stolen up on its errand of mercy, hidden from them by the breakers, until the little boat passed beyond the latter. Colwyn doubted if his craft would ride until the other came up, though he hoped to be able to keep Nellie and himself afloat. But he was not to save her life. The little vessel floated bravely until the other was within a few yards; then Colwyn turned to his companion.

'There is hope; there is life. Thank God, Nellie! Look up!'

She did, and fainted; she was but a woman, after all.

The rescuers pitched a rope to them, and soon they were safely on board. Nellie recovered in no long time, and in a couple of hours they were being driven back to Peterhead and their friends. The road was difficult and the drive long ; and Nellie had time to think with a shudder of those great gray rolling waves that would for nights haunt her sleep, and with heightened pulse of the man who had done all while anything was to be done, and then had sat down bravely and calmly to face death,

thinking only how he might comfort the girl whose hand he clasped. She reminded herself what had been her morning thoughts of him with a sigh—and a blush. The carriage was rolling over the stony streets of Peterhead, when she leant towards him :

‘ I told you not to ask me again, Mr. Colwyn, the question you asked this morning. I did not know my own mind or you. If it will please you, I can say now I do love you.’

S. J. W.

‘ REALLY, TOO UTTERLY—QUITE !’

Ah, bring me the sunflower and lily,
Let me live in the glorious sight ;
Though Philistines say it is silly,
It is really, too utterly—quite !

Let me twine, let each member contorted,
Show visions æsthetic and bright ;
What is art if we are not distorted,
And really, too utterly—quite ?

Let the dull-faded green be my raiment,
Relieved by no touches of light ;
We'll talk not of tailors' repayment,
For we're really, too utterly—quite !

If æsthetic perfection you long for,
And wish for a bask in the sight ;
In the Park we go in rather strong for
The really, too utterly—quite !

‘ Quite too too ? you hear the words muttered ;
Ah, yes, the thing here is quite right.
Man and woman are thoroughly ‘ uttered,’
And are really, too utterly—quite !

A BATCH OF HOTEL-BILLS.

SCARCELY less delicious than the feeling of enjoyment during a hard-earned holiday are the feelings of anticipation and retrospect, and of the two perhaps retrospect is the more delightful. Reality too often shatters the Spanish castles reared by anticipation; there are elements of doubt and fear, anxieties of calculation, qualms about weather, in the process of anticipation which have all been banished, solved, and dissipated by the time retrospect is indulged in. We are more at ease in retrospect, and can fight our battles and dream our dreams undisturbed; and thus it is, I suppose, that a batch of old hotel-bills brings memories of sunshine and storm, of adventures and petty worries, of bloodless victories won, and of ludicrous defeats suffered, which are especially delightful at this time of the year, when the eye pines for change, when the mind aches for relief, and when the body implores a rest from the toil of every-day life.

'Hôtel du Cheval Blanc, Chantilly.' Reading this heading I am carried back ten years, when travelling in France was very different from what it now is. Hans and Fritz were masters of the situation when I put up at the White Horse Hotel, Chantilly. Go where one might, there were Hans and Fritz—singly, or in pairs, or in groups, or in whole regiments. Amongst the leafy alleys of the old forest, fishing from punts in the waters of the White Queen's Castle (not the royal building of Chantilly, but

that little double-turreted box of which the traveller by the Northern Railway gets a glimpse through the trees as he crosses the noble viaduct), mooning about the walks and shrubberies of the château itself, blowing trumpets, beating drums, and performing stolid evolutions on the famous racecourse, swaggering along the streets, drinking and smoking at the *cafés* and *buvettes*, everywhere Hans and Fritz. Peace had been proclaimed, it is true; but Hans and Fritz were in possession until the great peace-ransom had been counted out and paid over. The poor landlord of the Cheval Blanc was at his wits' ends. The 'Étappen Major' was at the castle; but the officers of the Augusta regiment were quartered upon him, and held their mess in his coffee-room. They paid well and regularly, he said; they consumed good wine and plenty of it; but he was a patriot, and his poor heart burst to see the lanky, square-shouldered, spectacled Teuton officers swaggering and elbowing and clanking about, indisputable masters of him, his house, and everything in it. Of course I was pushed away into a small garret, next door to a long officer, who appeared to spend his nights in performing the bayonet exercise in 'Review time,' such a clanking and a stamping did he make. Was it to be expected that I, who, in the ordinary course of events, would have been salaamed to as a milor, before whom waiters were mute and landlords obsequious,—that I, a poor British tourist with a suit of dittoes and a

knapsack, was of the smallest imaginable consequence in the presence of these sturdy bronzed victors? Never did Briton feel less Britannic than I did, walking about the small streets of Chantilly, shouldered into the kennel by giants in blue uniforms. Yet, let it be said, never did conquerors behave better than did these Germans at Chantilly. There was no bullying, no rioting, no extortion, no drunkenness. At a bit of a row in a *buvette* one evening, a dragoon corporal handled one of the waiters rather severely; the proprietor of the place complained to the officer in command, and next morning Herr Corporal received twelve blows with the flat of a sword.

One day I sauntered down a favourite alley of the forest, and, deeming myself well away from Hans and Fritz, lit my pipe, and began a study of trees in my sketchbook. I had scarcely been seated ten minutes when the sound of distant song smote my ear. Nearer and nearer it came, not inharmoniously blending with the twitter of birds and the whisper of the breeze through the leaves, and soon I had an opportunity of seeing the famous Elizabeth regiment march past me in full force. The men's faces were turned in the direction of the Fatherland; and although their uniforms were patched and stained, and they themselves white with the dust of many miles, there was an honest pride and joy on their faces as they rolled forth in sonorous bass the soul-stirring notes of the 'Watch on the Rhine,' which the most ardent Teutonophobe could not have helped admiring.

Next morning mine host came to me with a rueful countenance. He was desolated, he said; but Lieutenant Stultz of the Elizabeths wanted my room. Of course

I had to go. Quite lately I revisited the White Horse at Chantilly. The little place was itself again, and English jockeys were exercising thoroughbreds where, a few years back, Uhlans and Dragoons caracoled and manoeuvred. There was nothing to remind me of the Teuton occupation save a half-effaced inscription in white paint on a stable-door: '10 Männer, 3 Pferde.' Mine host remembered me, and we cracked a bottle of Beaune together to the happier times.

Coach travellers of the old days knew, and commercial travellers of the present know, well 'The Bull Inn and Posting House, Sittingbourne, Kent.' As I read this heading on the next bill I take up, I call to mind a very pleasant summer week in Kent.

We were on a cricketing tour; had been well beaten at Canterbury, splendidly entertained at Chilham Castle, soaked to the skin but victorious at Faversham, scorched at Gore Court, and were at Sittingbourne for our final match at the Mote Park, Maidstone. A right jovial time we had; hard healthy exercise all day and never-to-be-forgotten sociable evenings. The Bull is one of the old-fashioned houses of call which formerly dotted our great highways, but now that their vocation is gone, only to be met with here and there. Commercial travellers, as a rule, are the monarchs in these establishments; but I rather think that wherever we went, carrying with us our big appetites, and our demands for the best rooms, we ousted them.

What a breakfast we made in the quaint old coffee-room, with its time-stained pictures, its cumbersome furniture, and its latticed windows, before starting on our long drive to Maidstone! And with what genuine pleasure do I

look back to that drive through some of the fairest scenery in Kent! The irreverent manner with which we treated the most respectable of rustics, the refrains we sent out into the pure summer air, the halt at the little half-way alehouse for the horses to take in water, and the driver and our umpire to take in something stronger,—we did not, for we were too old cricketers not to know the fatal after-effects of strong ale at ten o'clock in the morning,—the near shave we had of 'going to smash' down that steep hill which leads into Maidstone. These and a score of other little incidents reappear freshly as I look at the Bull Inn bill. I recall with pleasure the glorious day's cricket on that beautiful ground, with the panorama of wood, hill, and dale spread at our feet; with the red roofs of Maidstone nestling in the sunshine. Nor do I forget the drive back in the calm cool evening; the vision of chubby children cheering us from cottage-gates, of stalwart labourers, trudging homewards from their toil in the broad fields, stopping for a moment to gaze at us wonderingly as we passed. Then the cool bath and the evening at the Bull. Never did steaks taste so richly, or ale resemble more nearly the nectar of ancient fable; and never did ancient rustic finger-worn spinnet give out such dulcet tunes as when the musician of the eleven sang the solos of 'Georgia,' 'When Johnny comes marching Home,' and 'Auld Lang Syne,' and we made the old building ring with our chorus, much to the annoyance of the 'commercial' inditing their business letters, and much to the delight of waiters, ostlers, and 'brickers' assembled at the door. Next day we went our different ways; but recollections of the Bull at Sittingbourne will not

easily fade from any of our memories.

The next piece of paper would not be deciphered by ten Europeans in the City of London, and I have not the slightest idea of its meaning, save that it is a bill paid by me some years back at the 'Bamboo Stem' tea-house in the Japanese village of Miyanoshita.

Every visitor to Japan longs to perform one feat—to make the ascent of the Peerless Mountain, that perfect snow-white cone so familiar to us by the scrolls and lacquer-ware of Japanese manufacture. I was armed with the necessary passport declaring that my state of health necessitated complete change of air and scene, and after three days' hard walking arrived at the little village of Subashiri at the foot of the mountain. Previous to turning in for a good night's rest, I secured my supplies of wood and water, and interviewed the local mayor. He, having turned my pass over and over and entered its contents in a book, informed me that he 'thought' it was in order. Secure with this authority, after a good meal I lay down between the quilts which serve as beds in Japan, and was soon fast asleep. How long I slept I know not; but when all was dark and quiet I was awakened by a policeman with a huge lantern. I angrily demanded his business. With much gesticulation and prostration he informed me that since my interview with the mayor my passport, as it was copied into his book, had been reexamined, and had been found incomplete. I knew that a very strong prejudice had always existed amongst the Japanese against the ascent of Fuji-Yama by Europeans, and I knew that the copy of my passport was as incorrect as the original was correct; so I asserted that I intended to go up the moun-

tain, and defied mayor, police, and all. The officer listened stolidly, then represented the utter folly of my attempting resistance, and furthermore stated that his orders were to escort me back into Treaty Limits at daybreak. I was mad with vexation and disappointment, but the tea-house master and my coolie urged me for my own good not to resist; so I dismissed the officer with—well, a remark, and turned over to sleep.

With the first glint of light through the shutters, I was awakened. I breakfasted, dressed myself, and, having paid my bill, saw that a sergeant and half a dozen manikins in the uniform of his Imperial Japanese Majesty's Police were waiting for me outside. On country duty the native police wear the straw sandals of the people; but as I was a European, and a prisoner of rather peculiar importance, my escort were shod in ill-fitting blucher boots of the stiffest type. My plan of revenge was quickly made. Shouldering my knapsack, I strode off. For some miles my escort kept up very well; but as the sun increased in power, and the roads in roughness, the pace at which I was going began to tell upon them. One by one they limped and lagged behind; then one took off his boots and slung them over his back; then another, and another, until, by the time we had done ten miles, the sergeant alone had stuck to his boots. Poor fellow! He limped along pluckily in the greatest agony, but I was pitiless; I strode on at four miles an hour. At last he gave in, and the whole party were bare-footed; and if any of my readers remember the road, they will sympathise with them. Still I went on: I stopped not for refreshment; the midday sun came scorching down, the stones and boulders cut even my rough shoot-

ing-boots; but my cup of revenge was not quite full. It was quite brimming when I arrived at the 'Bamboo Stem' tea-house, within Treaty Limits, alone. An hour later the sergeant, more dead than alive, turned up, and during the next half-hour the poor little policemen one by one came dropping in. Then I relaxed into mercy, and ordered a good meal to be served to the martyrs of duty. The bill for this little entertainment is the one before me; it always serves to remind me of my complete revenge, but also that I have never made the ascent of the Peerless Mountain.

A little bundle of bills from Thames-side inns conjures up memories of long bright summer days passed in the purest of air, amidst the most characteristic of English scenery, in the easiest of costumes, and with the lightest of hearts. Memories of quaint old hostelries, with funny little bedrooms, and bowers of fresh sweet flowers, and lawns dipping into the water; memories of delicious early morning plunges; of tremendous breakfasts; of good steady work, so diversified by 'easies' under the great trees as to prevent a pleasure from being converted into a toil; of midday meals in pleasant meadows; of more work until the trees and foliage made deep black shadows on the river's face. Memories of many a night pull, when lock-keepers demanded double fees, and inn-keepers grew surly about being turned out of bed. All these memories, and a hundred others, remind me of a brief period of perfect independence and complete freedom from the yoke of Mrs. Grundy, never to be forgotten.

Another little collection reminds me of a pedestrian tour through the 'Garden of England'—Hythe, Romney, Lydd, and Rye (O,

that stretch of marsh between the two last places !),—straight through the Weald of Kent, where the men are stalwart if not amiable, the women comely, the cherries and apples unapproachable; where there are yet old manor-houses with moats and avenues and gables, sturdy and strong as when they were built by men with trunk-hose and lovelocks; timbered cottages, long deep lanes leading in circles to nowhere, village-greens and typical English hamlets undefiled by railways and untouched by builders. Goudhurst and Cranbrook of old smuggling repute, Horsemonden, Tonbridge, Seven-oaks, and so home. And doubly pleasant it is to associate the retrospect of sunny days and sweet labour with universal civility, cleanliness, and moderation in charges.

A bill headed 'The Grapes Inn, Reigate,' reminds me of a very enjoyable 'outing' with that crack Volunteer regiment, the 138th Middlesex. We had but little sunshine and plenty of snow, although Easter did fall late. But we had plenty of good hard work,

plenty of exposure, and half a dozen as jolly evenings as fall to the lot of most men to remember. Tremendous battles we fought on peaceful Surrey commons; great excitement we produced in peaceful Surrey villages, with our fifes and drums, our mounted officers, and especially our real ambulance wagon, which was mistaken for the colonel's private carriage, the regimental larder, and all sorts of other things. To be sergeant of the guard for a whole night after a heavy day's work was a little trying; but if we did not come up to the standard of her Majesty's line regiments in smartness and precision, we excelled them at least in cheerfulness and intelligence.

There are lots of other hotel-bills, but the length of my paper warns me to stop. In conclusion, I may remark that if a man is not an artist, or does not keep a diary, there are few pleasanter aids to the remembrance of past bright holidays than the perusal of old hotel-bills, that is—and it is an important saving clause—if they are not heavy.



THE DEAN'S MEDIATION.

See the Story.

THE DEAN'S MEDIATION.

MISS DORMER was persuaded that Providence had specially arranged her circumstances, so that the bringing up of her orphan niece, Winifred Grantham, should be a crowning success. What could be more conducive to a subdued and wholesome frame of mind than living within the shadow of that grand old cathedral? What influences more desirable than those produced by the conversation of a maiden aunt, and the intimate society of an unmarried Dean and his unmarried sister?

The unmarried Dean bore his perilous position meekly and calmly. He was not blind to the fact that, when in the pulpit or taking an hour's exercise, his portly form was the butt for an artillery of eyes that might have made sad havoc; he was not unconscious that his pleasant generality of conversation was sometimes met by faint sighs and reproachful glances. Yet, like a hero, he bore it all and showed no sign.

When Winnie Grantham had turned eighteen, there was no alteration in the bright freedom with which she had from childhood invaded and cheered the Deanery. So sweet a vision as the golden-haired girl could not but be welcome anywhere; and Miss Dormer, from the serene placidity of forty-four years, passed in entire ignorance of the world and its ways, actually believed that her darling's rosy blushes and pleasant excitement were the result of the edifying conversation of the Dean and his sister. Blessed innocence!

Now you see the Dean had a neighbour, a widow lady, who was

rejoicing in the visit of her soldier-son, Captain Charles Burnett. This gallant young officer had been amongst the many brave fellows who left England not so very long ago, and had the misfortune of emulating the exploits celebrated by the rhyme which says,

'The King of France with forty thousand
men
Drew their swords—and put them back
again!'

And chafing from the recollection of the general disappointment he and other aspirants for British honour and glory had experienced, it was very soothing to have the quiet of his mother's house enhanced by many pleasant hours at the Deanery, where certainly Winnie's bright face was not the least attraction.

Miss Dormer objected to men as a class. She thought it a pity that they existed, and considered them absolutely unsafe unless clad in ecclesiastical garments. This opinion had not been arrived at through any disappointment attendant on the tender passion; indeed, I think the fact that never had her heart been assailed nor her hand sought had a good deal to do with Miss Dormer's very uncharitable views. At any rate, she so firmly adhered to them, that Winnie was afraid to tell her aunt what had made the Dean's house so charming of late; her only confidant, a very safe one, was her dog Punch.

'He's *very* nice, isn't he, Punchie, darling?' always met with an approving wriggle of the short tail that spoke volumes.

At last the Dean could not help noticing that more than common

interest was evinced by the young people; and he was placed in a most awkward position by having the declaration of love made at his house, and being asked to further the gallant soldier's suit.

'Goodness me! Why, Winnie, what made you do this?' he inquired in his perplexity, fixing his glasses on his nose, and staring at the blushing face before him.

'I didn't do anything!' faintly protested the young lady.

'It was my fault, sir! Who could help it?' ardently explained the suitor.

The Dean would have admitted the truth of this if he had not been terribly puzzled.

'I must think it over. Go home, Winnie, and tell your aunt I'm coming over for a quiet talk in an hour's time.'

Slowly and shamefacedly Winnie walked away through the Deanery garden, followed by Punch, who, as appropriate to the occasion, allowed his tail to hang down, and an expression of wretchedness to pervade his appearance.

They went home the longest way with much the air which distinguishes naughty children who have played truant from school, and are painfully aware that they will be castigated on coming before their irate parents.

Having gained the room where Miss Dormer sat in a softly-shaded light, placidly engaged in embroidering a huge sunflower in the centre of a table-cover, Winnie timidly broached her subject, feeling thankful for the shade which rendered her blushes less visible.

'The Dean is coming over in an hour, aunt—I mean half an hour, to have a quiet chat with you.'

'Dear me, how very extraordinary!' exclaimed Miss Dormer, hastily rising. 'Are you sure of what you say, Winnie?'

'Yes, quite sure; and,' she hurriedly

went on, 'I think the Dean is so nice, so kind, don't you, aunt?'

'He is my most valued friend,' replied her aunt gravely, and looking more and more mystified.

'Then—then—please do what he asks you,' blurted out Winnie, and she vanished from the room, leaving Miss Dormer more tumultuously overcome than she ever remembered to have been before.

Having escaped from her aunt's presence, Winnie retired to one of her favourite retreats—a curious quiet room which opened on the old-fashioned garden. Here she presented the kitten with a saucer of milk, and sat down on the window-sill to think over matters. Punch occupied her lap, and cogitated the *pros* and *cons* of the situation with an earnestness that would have made him the best of advisers if he could only have spoken. Failing that, he would have liked to have bitten somebody.

Very tenderly the Dean managed his explanations, and he had much to bear. The shock to Miss Dormer was great; and her excitement made her express such cruel doubts of mankind in general, that the Dean needed all his eloquence and the exhibition of some personal sorrow to convince Miss Dormer that a sex to which *he* had the misfortune to belong was not without its redeeming points. Then the good lady assured him that he was the exception which proved the rule, and that *soldiers* were the most unreliable beings; and that after all her care of Winnie it seemed hard, *very hard!* However, he was so far successful that Miss Dormer requested him to go home and fetch that beast of prey, Captain Charles Burnett, that she might consider him and his aspirations.

So it came about that when a manly step, which she could not

hope was anything better than the Dean's, approached the room where Winnie still sat in the window, Punch looked seriously disturbed; and when the door opened to admit, not the Dean, but a handsome broad-shouldered young man, Punch turned his back (whether in disgust or discretion is not known), and the birds in the garden whispered to each other that there was soon to be a wedding.

'What did auntie say?' asked Winnie anxiously, when she found her mind capable of interesting itself in common mortal things.

'Don't clearly remember—nothing very savage.'

'Was she angry with the Dean?'

'She did not yield to any unseemly exhibition while I was present, dear; but you see I was thinking more of you and myself than the Dean; and when she told me to come to you, of course I left them to settle the rest. Suppose you take me over this jolly old garden.'

It was by no means disagreeable, strolling in shady places sacred from the vulgar gaze of menials, and chaperoned by that indefatigable faithful creature, Winnie's dog. Punch thought it right to go with them; but whenever there was a pause in a shadier corner than usual, the refinement of the animal made him affect to be interested in botanical specimens as known by the smell, and he seldom gazed curiously on the lovers. Possibly this was caused by jealousy, as hitherto his own licks had been Winnie's only caresses.

In the midst of one of those bursts of rapture so interesting to two, so hideously absurd to the world at large, Captain Burnett felt his arm clutched convulsively.

'Charlie, I hear auntie's voice close to us!'

'By Jove,' stopping short near an arbour, 'there's the old Dean!'

Old Dean, indeed! The arrogance of young lovers is proverbial. He was only fifty, and she was forty-four—and blushing like a girl.

'This accounts for the simplicity of our arrangements,' whispered the Captain, in high amusement. 'What an old fox that Dean is!'

And then the birds began gossiping again, and this time they announced *two* weddings.

Scandal always gains with each telling; but the facts were these: The force of the arguments he had used in favour of the hopes of another couple first opened the Dean's eyes to the thought of trying matrimony for himself; and but for having had to use all his persuasion to prove to Miss Dormer that 'man was not born to dwell alone,' and that, in consequence, it was the bounden duty of right-thinking persons to help him to double his existence, the kindly Dean would never have discovered that it was possible for a long and pleasant friendship to warm into a tender passion.

'Shall we both be married together, auntie?' asked Winnie mischievously.

'O, no, my dear!' said Miss Dormer nervously. 'I must see you well out of my hands first; and I could not attend to two important matters at the same time.'

'Then,' urged the Dean mildly, but firmly, 'our wedding (a quiet one) shall be directly after these scapegraces are gone; and they can return from their travels to find us at home in the Deanery.'

'Capital!' cried Captain Burnett, who had his arm round Winnie's waist, and was delighted with everything just now. 'Three cheers for the result of "the Dean's mediation!"'

TAIN ON THE RHONE.

A Memory.

ON the line of railroad from Paris to Marseilles, and about half-way between Lyons and Valence, lies the pleasant little town called Tain. There I spent a delightful vacation of nearly two months, September and October in 1879; and thence I visited La Louvescq, high up in the Ardèche Mountains, of which visit I may write another time. All the circumstances of my sojourn in Tain were so happy, that memory recurs to it often, and with great vividness and complacency. I see now the broad and rapid Rhone as it speeds between Tain and Tournon, and the noble bridge that spans it, linking the two towns; the mountains rising abruptly from the river-bank on the Tournon side (the right, on the way to Marseilles); and, half-way up one of the boldest peaks, the white statue of the Blessed Virgin, in bold relief against the dark mountain-side, niched in a natural cleft, standing alone, without shrine or adornment, on the rocky ledge, as though it had alighted there from the sky, and seems to gaze contemplatively and prayerfully upon the river running swiftly below. Tain is a rather dull and unambitious town; but it has its notabilities, its church and curé, its mayor and magistrates, its cercle (club) and rampant politicians, and its important railway station; whereas the opposite and rival Tournon, being on the wrong side of the river for communication with the business and political world, affects a staid character, is moulded quite on the antique, and is thoughtful and in-

tellectual. Tournon is possessed of a very fine and quite famous university, which alone, in the opinion of the inhabitants and many outsiders, casts in the shade all the material and commercial advantages of Tain. All the great men in Tain were educated in Tournon, entirely or partly; so that settles the question of their rival pretensions to fame.

I must tell all I know (which is simply what I saw and heard, for no book supplies one tittle of my information) about Tain. Like most folks possessed of pleasant reminiscences, I fancy that the world at large is deprived of an essential joy until it has shared them with me. I intend to ramble in this paper, because simply I did nothing but ramble while at Tain; there was no system whatever in my proceedings there. I never knew what I should do to-day, or where betake myself to-morrow, and the whole life was one of bright accidents and surprises. Let poetry moon as it lists, and rave about rock and dell and stream and other soulless charms that claim all our homage and our ecstasies, and merely condescend to exist for us in return. Scenes are chiefly pleasant to me, either in fact or in memory, from their pleasant personal associations. The responsive warmth, the humour, character, soul, that are in man, and in man alone, are what render the brightest scenes delightful even after they have passed away for ever from the sight, and make the bleakest aspects of Nature charming.

Country towns above all possess

those elements of attraction we denote by the term 'characters.' A 'character' is made up of originality and simplicity. A 'character' must not be quite virtuous nor vicious, nor foolish, nor wise, nor even strikingly odd. There is nothing common, and nothing remarkably uncommon, in a 'character.' Yet he is a typical being, but typical rather of what we have often fancied than what we have often seen. He has only individual existence, though he belongs to a class; but the class has no unity except in our mind. Each 'character' in real life is different from every other one, and cannot be copied, represented, or reproduced by any process. Tain possesses several characters, Tournon few or none. There will soon be no more 'characters' within the sphere of modern culture. Human nature will have lost its emphasis, its bouquet, and any one man will do as a study, if such a study be worth attention, of the whole human family. What a prospect! Imagine the racy Hermitage of the valley of Tain and Tournon (how my palate exults at the bare thought of it!) assuming the thin flat flavour of the *petits vins* of Bordeaux, or any flavour, however admired, but its own! Welcome the bacchanal phylloxéra first! Let him sip the juice in its spring and root rather than it should degenerate and lose 'character.' But I must only wander in Tain, not in ideas.

First, then, let me call forth Dr. G——, my host, with his amiable spouse, and little Joseph, the single sunray of the house, white-haired, dark-eyed, babbling in French and English alternately, as the humour takes him, or perhaps as the father or mother element predominates in him. I met the doctor first in a far-distant and far different scene, where bleak

cliffs that stem the North Atlantic take the place of the vine-mantled mountains of Ardèche; a rough and stormy sea contrasts with the placid Rhone; the fisher's hamlet, reeking with the odour of brine from the ocean, the vintner's sunny home, with its perfume of the grape and its wealth of the luscious produce of Southern Europe. The doctor was then medical officer aboard a French frigate of the line on the Newfoundland station. France still possesses there the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and has a protectorate over her fishermen, who ply their trade along a portion of the coast for a season of the year. The visit of the French vessels of war to the harbour of St. John's, the capital, is quite a yearly event; mutual compliments and salutes are bandied between the officials of the town and the French naval officers; and artillery from land and sea bellows forth signals of peaceful regard that sound like threats of mutual destruction. When a British man-of-war is present, which is often the case, the din is tremendous; and till the smoke clears away, and the joyous pennants are seen flying in upper air over smooth and stately hulls, and yards manned with blue-jackets from peak to mast that look like gigantic combs with teeth turned upward, till this magnificent vision slowly unfolds itself, the mind can imagine nothing but havoc and ruin amid the waters where these monsters thunder and roar at each other. Yet it is all fun and friendship. These yearly visits of marine monsters are very interesting to colonial life, for more and better reasons than the ceremony and festivity that attend them, or for reasons consequent on festivity, and not unconnected with matrimony. Ball partnership in the stiff and stilted society of European cities

may have no practical meaning or result, just as it is devoid of all true spirit of enjoyment. But ball partners in the colonies very often become life partners. Say what you will, artful and artificial beauty of the *salon*, your colonial sister is more artful than you from her very artlessness; and whether from her charming ignorance of the ways of high life, and splendid contempt for what is unnatural in the same, or whether from the very *naïveté* of her effort (happily unsuccessful) to copy those ways, or from that fresh and innocent beauty and grace which, like your spices, you must seek in the colonies, for they do not grow at home; or from all these together, and other qualities requiring a nicer perception than mine to distinguish, certain it is that trained and tried warriors of the army and navy who have run the gauntlet of famed and fashionable beauty in the most select circles of Europe unscathed, fall disarmed and defenceless at the feet of the colonial belle, not in transient admiration, but in lifelong and lawful homage. I speak of Northern colonies, where grows the fair plant that has the pride and the blush of its mother stock, besides a freshness and delicacy all its own.

Doctor G—— met, wooed, and took off with him to his home in Southern France one of the best and sweetest young ladies in N——; one who realised completely the charming picture of Virginia while adorning it with all the graces and accomplishments of our modern life and culture. I knew her well for years before the fatal French frigate arrived, saw her blossom from girlhood to womanly perfection, and from first to last recognised in her a type of innocent gaiety with every maiden charm. It was long since I had seen or

heard of the doctor and his wife; but I knew they were somewhere in the south of France, and being on my leisurely way to Italy, I procured their address in Paris. Hence my visit to Tain, where, at last, I am back again.

The doctor has settled down from the slim and trim naval officer to the habits and appearance of the steady country practitioner. His English recollections have tinged his manner and very figure. He retains, of course, his Southern complexion, but is no darker than any of our English gentlemen of Norman descent. He wears whiskers *à l'Anglaise*, without moustache, and with bare chin; and a tall hat—almost the only one I saw in the place—and a quiet professional dress, and he is growing portly. He is a clever man in his profession, a splendid host, a thoughtful and affectionate husband and father, and so no ‘character.’ Mrs. G—— I have described; she has lost her bright colour and rounded form to a great extent. Ah, the wild sea-breezes! What balm and beauty of sunny inland clime can blow such roses or bleach such lilies! But in all else she is the gentle, gay, and winning girl of years ago. Mrs. K——, her mother, lives with them, and sighs all day, amid the tranquil beauty of her home, for the ocean-rock far away, where all her memories are enshrined, and her husband and many children lie asleep beneath the rugged fir. Is it not true what I said about personal associations, affectionate memories, binding us to a scene beyond all the power of mere sky and landscape? She, Mrs. K——, has all to render happy her declining years that woman could wish for, and admits this. She spent, to my knowledge, in the far-off land, a life of many trials and bereavements and peculiar

afflictions, and was truly 'acquainted with grief' throughout. Yet she yearns all day long after the scene of her sorrows, can love no other place, and will, I am sure, return there to die of the luxury of woe.

There is but one delightful boy in France for me, and his name is Joseph. 'Monsieur, comment se dit ça en Anglais?' This was one of his ways of having fun with me. 'Why, you imp, you know what it is in English as well as I do!' How we romped in the garden, Joseph and I! How we went forth each morning hand in hand, and full of gravity and importance, with bread-crumbs to feed the fish in the garden-fountain, the '*p't'y p'w'sons*,' impossible to render his chirping by any letters! He had strong English tendencies, too—was fond of the horses and everything connected with yard and stables; brave, and rather inclined to court danger; fair, flaxen-haired, and *northy* in everything except his fiery-black eyes. As a boy Joseph is a 'character': he is a good deal of a quizz, fond of puzzling his seniors, full of quaint conclusions of his own on all manner of things, but waiting times and seasons for revealing them; he can be a thorough little innocent, or a thorough little rogue, according to whim, but is always straightforward and honourable and sensitive to reproof.

Outside the house, in the town, and chiefly in the cercle or club, where I went each evening with the doctor, the true 'characters' were to be met. Let me first try to give a notion of a cercle in a French country town. The cercle is the French substitute for our club-room, but is as different from it as most French things are from English. It is better in many respects, and falls short in others. It is not, like some of

ours, a place for morose silence and moody self-concentration, but a lively chatty place. You find all the leading papers there, but they are not used as curtains to screen a reader from the surrounding company. On the contrary, no Frenchman appears able to keep his news long to himself. He tells it first in every lineament of his mobile features, then blurts it out with emphatic gesture and a delighted smile, or a savage frown, as the nature of the news may suggest. Nevertheless, in the French cercle, however humble the rank of many of its members—and there appears great freedom of admission—a decorum and propriety are always observed that, I believe, would be impossible in a like institution among Englishmen. I speak here of a country club-room, such as that of Tain, where every class in the town was represented; where there was a '*brasserie*' connected with the room, and billiard-tables and card-tables at hand, and every shade of politics admitted, both in the papers lying on the tables and in the members who read them.

This cercle was strongly Republican dashed with Radical; but there were Legitimist and clerical organs received, and some members with those views always present. Yet I never heard what might be called a dispute or contemptuous epithet. Coffee was used by nearly all in their after-dinner visits; very few affected the *petit verre*. Beer (becoming very popular throughout France) of a light description was drunk sparingly, and not much smoking indulged. In fact all were sober, self-restrained men. It was amusing to hear those whose views agreed get together and discuss, generally very cleverly, government measures. The Church comes in for a wonderfully large share of re-

strictive cercle legislation. What is to be done with the curés if they will not chime in with the ruling ideas is a great topic in the cercle. I should have been horrified at their pending fate, did I not know well that most of these men (the doctor especially, who was always moderate, and is too kind-hearted even to assume the ferocity of a true Republican) have intimate friends amongst those same curés, and are as likely as not to open their arms to the first cassocked figure they meet, as they leave the club with wrathful faces, and press him to their hearts. Many of the French—I may say most of them in the country—who have political opinions, create for themselves an ideal curé, whom they hate with fierce malignity, and torment him in their wrathful fancy. But they are on excellent terms with the real curé, whom they respect, and cannot help respecting, for his simple virtues and blameless life, present to their view and open to their criticism every day in the year. If you cite him, they say, 'Ah, oui; *notre curé*—c'est autre chose.' Strange, too, that the moment the ideal curé becomes realised, or even remains ideal, in any other nationality except theirs, he is not half so detestable—nay, may be, especially if English, quite a safe companion. This was the character I maintained among them, though I am sure that, except for the greater freedom (permissible to me as a stranger, but not certainly to a clergyman resident among them) with which I mingled with them, there was nothing in my manner or language to sanction or harmonise with their anticlerical opinions. True, I was not always horrified where a French clergyman would have been horrified—either because I did not believe there was substance in all this froth, or because I was ready

always to admit the portion of truth and reason that, in my experience, is always to be found in the most extravagant tirades. I have always believed, too, in respecting the choice and judgment of a nation; and as a Churchman adapting myself to it in all that is purely political, and making allowance even for transient encroachment in the heat of conflict on our grounds, till the line be well marked under the new system of things. However, I did not take it at all as a compliment to my clerical character when it was pretty publicly declared in the cercle that as a curé I was just the man of the day; and I doubt strongly that the bishop of that region would have welcomed me into his diocese on such a recommendation.

The principal 'character' frequenting the cercle, or dwelling in Tain itself, was an old gentleman whom I find recorded in my notebook as the 'gourmand.' Indeed, I believe I never knew his real name, nor asked it, though he is quite a notable and wealthy person in Tain, and we met every day, and were on most intimate terms. This gentleman is a politician of the Danton school; in language, at least, a ferocious and blood-thirsty Republican; in manner a rough, but really kind-hearted and hospitable, man; but all his other tastes and fancies, every energy of his mind and will, centred in one ruling passion, *la gourmandise*. He was a politician only by fits and starts, a *gourmand* always; a revolution in Government had no interest for him in comparison with the turning, at the right moment, of a *sautée de poulets*; and I never knew him once to enter on a discussion of any kind without either beginning or ending with a description of his last effort in the *cuisine*. He was certainly nearly seventy years of age, yet never

apparently gave a passing thought to anything except eating. Not a luscious article for the table could be exposed in any window or on any stall in Tain but he knew of it, hung over it, cooked it in fancy or reality if it promised a successful effort of his art. I met him over and over again on his return from one of his expeditions, and enjoyed the racy enthusiasm, the downright poetry, of his descriptions of a fresh tongue, a new sort of sausage, a specially tempting fowl or turkey, he had seen in his morning rounds. Indeed, he was rarely to be met without some article for the table hanging from some part of his person; he never carried a basket or satchel—O no, he loved to parade his treasures, to expatiate on them in the public thoroughfare, to halloo to any appreciative person across the street, or in the distance, and beckon him near to inspect his purchase. Nothing, however, gratified him more than a visit, not in the sacred hours of cooking, but after, when he produced the fruit of his skill in all the glory of transformation; pointed out the mottled marble, so regular, so softly subsiding into red and white tints, in a sausage; the rich seaweed colour of his last *pâté de foie*, the dome-like spring of his chicken-pie. And, to give him his due, he was not averse to your exercising your judgment and pronouncing approval by the use of other senses than the eye. But then this was to be done in company, after each appointed guest had paid due homage to his art by individual criticism. Then it was his custom to say, with that depreciatory shrug of his, 'Ah, well, you like this; but it is nothing. So-and-so, this or that sauce or seasoning, did not turn out as I expected; but, all the same, you shall try it. A few fellows (N—and N—and N—and, you know, and

a few others) are coming out to my little place'—a cottage and vineyard outside the town—'on Thursday. *L'honneur de vous y voir*, eh? You shall taste this *pâté*; and, O, I have hit on such a salad! *Jamais, jamais, je vous assure*,' &c.

I dined with him several times, in company with the doctor and all the notables, at his 'little place;' and I can truly state that nowhere has it been my lot to meet better company, or to eat a better dinner in a sweeter spot. No gaudy *salon* or cribbed and confined cottage-parlour for the 'gourmand.' O no, by no means! In the garden—trellised and arched all over with vines, and impervious to the sun's rays, or to any influence but the delightful breeze stealing in and rustling the leaves with a sound of silk, and carrying with it the perfume of the ripened grapes—there was laid the long table with its spotless white cloth and rustic chairs set around it. Near by another smaller table equally white, whereon stood great columns of clean plates, and a regiment, a whole brigade, of long-necked bottles, erect and silent, but meaning, without a shadow of doubt, old Hermitage; for this is the country of Hermitage, and all of them who are any way comfortable have lots of it grown old in their cellars. They don't send it all away. O no, they like their native juice too well for that! The 'gourmand' is now in his glory. He is almost blind, and wears double-lensed glasses of a bright-blue tinge; he is in a *clean blouse*. Every one knows he can don the best broadcloth if he chooses; but he despises fashion and display, except on the table. He wears an old white-felt hat, which he keeps on all the time of dinner; any one else may do the same with his own hat if he likes. 'Perfect liberty,

messieurs; enjoy yourselves; life was made for enjoyment; accommodate yourselves to enjoyment in every possible way, and as best suits your ease and comfort. *Vive la joie!* So the hospitable old reprobate begins. We commenced with a famous salad, either because it was famous, and must be pronounced so to prove our qualifications for the rest that was to come, or because it is the fashion in Tain. At all events, I never shall forget the judicial silence that reigned during the consumption of this delicacy; the frequent pauses, with eyes raised to the sky and head in attitude of listening, as it were, to the relish of the spicy esculent; the interrogative glances addressed to each in succession from behind the blue spectacles, but commanding silence for the present, till due time were given for a thorough test; the mingled modesty and triumph with which the host received the clamour of applause that signalled the consumption of the dish; the royal wave of the hand at last, deprecating the expected praise, but trembling withal in exultation, while the tongue essayed to pronounce the usual 'Ce n'est rien'—'That is nothing, gentlemen; a poor affair'—'Une autre fois,' &c. It was rich, the scene as well as the salad. After this, the deluge—of viands, of wine, of conversation. They were a clever lot of men; a young lawyer especially clever, who descanted on the French law of inheritance as compared with the English, and defended, as I thought it could not be defended, the system of partition of property among the children. He was excellently well read in history—which I believe is not the case with all even of our best lawyers—and was thoroughly eloquent and interesting in all he said. We drank the Republic; I

among the rest without a qualm, for I believe it was the only thing, with all its wrong doings, to save France in her late crisis. And we were all thoroughly amiable and peaceful, if not agreed upon all points; and we felt the full force of the Napoleonic words that at length issued from the mouth of our host: 'Messieurs, je suis content, très content.' He meant with us, and with the *cuisine* also; for his content flowed from ours, and ours from the dinner, and all together from the noble art to which he devoted his declining years. Ah, the old 'gourmand,' will he ever raise his thoughts above that fat paunch of his? I fear not. True, he is not a mere glutton or sensualist. He is a student, an artist, an enthusiast; but his art is a passion, and the passions of old age are incurable. Of course he is not a gentleman in our sense of the word. He is a wealthy man and a respected man, and well conducted—fit to be mayor or grand juror, or what you will, except curé. But he is, all the same, a cynical old infidel, who will not even discuss principles, but simply chuckles them out of the way. Then he uses frightful language at times with perfect *sang-froid*, and without a particle of emotion. Indeed, his favourite epithets are quite meaningless, and only used from sheer truculence, and because they have a bad sound, and he seems quite disposed to exchange them for worse, if worse existed. One of his pet bad words is an English word Frenchified; the worst we have, perhaps, but it has a sweet benediction till it gets the French roll between the teeth of this old sinner. It is a noun too, but he uses it as an adjective and an interjection, and so can bring it into his talk whenever he wishes, or repeat it, as he does, when not

engaged in talking, for mere delight in its badness. He has no children and no wife—that is, his wife is a silent, unseen, devout woman, and does not count for him. They seem perfect strangers to each other, mentally and socially. He is from very nature an old bachelor, lives as such, and glories in it. He is a ‘character,’ not without some—shall I say?—good points; but, after all, not a nice ‘character.’

The doctor's family, brothers and sisters, over the way in Tournon, are nice people. I won't say ‘characters;’ for nice people, industrious, kind, accomplished, sensible people, are never ‘characters.’ The eldest brother owns a large mill outside Tain; he has the finest stock of poultry of all sorts there I ever saw. And many a time we went out of an evening, clutched a fat fowl for supper; and it was good to see the doctor himself in his white shirt-sleeves prepare a delicious *sautés de poulet*. He is as good a cook at a dish like that as the ‘gourmand’ himself. I fancy he, too, has rather a *penchant* for the art; for it was quite a matter of choice with him to attend to the *cuisins* on these occasions. These little evening-parties were delightful, rendered so by the thorough

family feeling between us all, and by the presence and influence of Mrs. G——, Mrs. K——, and the doctor's sisters, all perfect in lady-like manner and sentiment. To them also were due the flowers that decked the board, the sprightly chat and repartee, the permitted cigarette with our coffee, so sweet and soothing because permitted, and because of the consciousness of their enjoying our enjoyment of it. Then the rattle home with carriage and horses yoked with those preposterous collars, with hames ending in a pair of horns a yard long, and hung all round with bells of divers shapes and sounds. We sang to their music as we went, glees and barcarolles in French and Italian, and Joseph screamed with delight. Other evenings we spent at home, alternating between Tain and Tournon, amid flowers and feasting, quaffing rare old Hermitage, enjoying choice music, one of the doctor's sisters being a musician of the first order, and he and all of them good amateurs. So no wonder if Tain and Tournon are sweet to my memory, and that my very dearest wishes and feelings are enshrined in the twin towns on the banks of the pleasant Rhone.

R. V. H.

IN A BRIGHTON TRAIN.

RAILWAY travelling, with all its manifold advantages, can hardly be said, in England at least, to promote sociability. Beyond an occasional frigid interchange of newspapers, or an inquiry couched in more or less polite terms respecting the opening or closing of windows, people are apt to regard their fellow-passengers in the light of unavoidable nuisances and intruders on their privacy, whose presence they are compelled to undergo, but with whom, save the purchased privilege of occupying seats in the same carriage, they have absolutely nothing in common. It is, perhaps, owing to this prevalent idea that the majority of travellers are in the habit of assuming a stiffness of manner and a studied indifference of tone wholly foreign to their usual demeanour, and even of seeking refuge in simulated drowsiness, from sheer apprehension of being betrayed into conversation with their neighbours. There are, however, exceptions to every rule, and I had an opportunity of experiencing the truth of this axiom a few weeks ago.

My destination being a small station on the Brighton line ignored by the express, I took my seat resignedly in a slow afternoon train, dragging its weary length from Victoria to London-super-Mare, and requiring as much time for the single trip as under more favourable circumstances would have sufficed for the double journey. Finding myself in the undisturbed possession of a smoking compartment, I lit my cigar, and

was soon engrossed by the last number of *Punch* until we reached Croydon, where the door of the carriage suddenly opened, and an individual unencumbered with luggage stepped briskly in. The newcomer was a little man, apparently about sixty-five years of age, but hale and wiry, with bright twinkling eyes and a singularly shrewd countenance; he was evidently disposed to be communicative, for before the train had left the station, he volunteered an observation about the weather, to which I responded *de mon mieux*. Presently, glancing at the paper I held in my hand, he abruptly asked me if I had read Mr. Joseph Hatton's history of that periodical in *London Society*, and, without waiting for an answer, informed me that Alfred Bunn's *Word with Punch*, the cost of which was originally threepence, had lately been priced in a bookseller's catalogue fifteen shillings.

'Poor stuff it was,' he went on; 'but they didn't like it at headquarters, I can tell you. Did you ever know that Bunn was fond of cultivating what Keeley called the "conundrum"? Here is one he wrote one morning when I was sitting with him in his room at Drury Lane: "If a mermaid's locks could speak, which of Milton's works would they name?" D'ye give it up? "*Comb-us!*" Ah,' he continued, after a moment's pause, 'many's the smart thing I have heard in my day; but of all the ready wits I ever came across, not one could hold a candle to Hook. Poor old Theodore! the last time

I saw him was at his place at Fulham—Egmont Villa they called it—I was then a youngster about town, and most of his stories have slipped my memory; but I remember one which is worth repeating. Hatchett (of the White Horse Cellar, you know) had asked him to dinner in a friendly way, and, before they sat down, began to make excuses for the simplicity of the fare. "No apologies, my good fellow," said Hook; "what can one expect from a *Hatchet* but a *chop*?"

'Redhill, Reigate!' shouted the porters, as my fellow-traveller concluded his anecdote, and, extracting from his coat-pocket a meerschau of capacious dimensions, proceeded leisurely to fill it from a sealskin tobacco-pouch.

'I daresay you think me an odd fish,' he observed, when his pipe was fairly alight, 'but you mustn't judge by appearances. I happen to be in a talkative humour to-day; but as a rule I am remarkably reserved, especially with strangers.'

I thought of the barber in the *Arabian Nights*, and of Charles Maurice's 'Parleur éternel,' but said nothing.

'That is,' he added, correcting himself, 'when I have more than one listener. Two are company, three are none, has always been my maxim. Do you see the inn by the roadside on your left, going up the hill?'

I saw nothing but the approach to the tunnel, and told him so.

'Never mind,' he replied, 'it is there, or was a year or two ago. When this line was opened, I stayed there a couple of days with an old chum of mine; and while we were sitting over our wine—denced good wine it was too!—the conversation chanced to turn on the theatre, a favourite subject with me. Ah,' said my friend, 'I was a great playgoer when I left

college, and once I was smitten and regularly done. You remember—no, I won't mention names; but when I tell you that the lady in question was the most fascinating creature and the sweetest ballad-singer that ever trod the London boards in our time, you will guess easily enough. Well, it was what the young fellows nowadays call a decided case of spoons with me, and I couldn't rest until I had by some means let her know it. I was a mere lad then, but I had an instinctive idea that it would never do to present myself empty-handed; so, being in funds just then, I went to Rundell & Bridge's, the fashionable jewellers in those days, and selected, on approval, two of the handsomest bracelets they had in their shop, which I took away with me after paying a round sum by way of deposit. Armed with these and a flaming epistle, in which my innamorata was requested to choose whichever ornament she considered most becoming to her, I posted off next morning to her residence in Belgravia, then comparatively a desert; and on my arrival delivered letter and parcel to a very smart waiting-maid, who carried them up to her mistress while I awaited the result—I need not say how impatiently—in the entrance-hall. In a few minutes—hours they seemed to me—a door opened on the floor above; I hailed the sound as a summons, and had already one foot on the staircase, when a voice, the rich contralto of which it was impossible to mistake, arrested my steps. I listened, and heard, in an awfully distinct tone, the following deathblow to my hopes: "Tell the young gentleman I shall keep *both*, and—show the young gentleman out!"

'Yes,' pursued my companion, after he had sufficiently chuckled over this reminiscence, 'she was

a charming actress, and the best Lady Teazle I ever beheld. To see her and Farren together was indeed a treat. Talking of the "cock salmon" reminds me of a starring expedition he made to Brighton many years ago; the theatre was then jointly managed by one of the innumerable Vinings and a dentist of the name of Bew. The latter seldom interfered in the ordinary arrangements, leaving all minor details to his more experienced partner; but on important occasions, and this was one of them, he liked to be consulted. Farren had, of course, been playing *Secret Service*, *Uncle John*, and *Nicholas Flam*; and had a fancy for winding up with Coddle in *Married Life*, but doubted whether it could be done with a single rehearsal. Vining was of the same opinion, and suggested a repetition of the pieces already given. "Pooh, pooh!" cried Bew; "one rehearsal will be ample; take my advice, and have it out at once!" "Are you quite sure, Mr. Bew," said Farren, in his dry way, "that you are not confounding a comedy with a tooth?"

Here the narrator paused for breath, and at the same moment our train glided slowly into the station of Three Bridges. When we were again in motion, he abruptly inquired if I remembered old Tayleure, the ex-comedian and theatrical print-seller? I replied in the affirmative. "A queer fellow, my dear sir, full of anecdote, and never so happy as when induced to gossip about his early days. He never entirely got over his disappointment at having failed to hit the taste of the town as a comic actor; and I recollect going into his shop opposite St. Martin's Church one afternoon, and finding him hobbling about in a pair of list-slippers, for in his latter years he was a martyr to the gout, "Ah,

sir," he said, alluding to his pet grievance, "they wouldn't have me then, but they would now, I warrant you. I'm terribly mistaken," he went on, holding out his foot, "if that wouldn't remind them of *List-on*; it would, sir—not a *Doubt-on't*!"

'You've been at Lewes?' continued the indefatigable old gentleman, wandering from one topic to another in what Mr. Pelham terms a very 'rudderless' manner.

'A town to be avoided on the 5th of November,' I answered, 'by those who object to squibs and crackers.'

'Exactly. Well, a few miles from there is a country house; and in one of the rooms, legibly written and hanging over the fireplace like a scriptural text, is a really sensible maxim:

"Naething to be done in haste but the gripping o' fleas."

Not far from there used to live poor Tommy Patcham (Patcham wasn't his real name, but that doesn't matter), a country squire afflicted with one shoulder higher—or, if you prefer it, more ambitious—than the other; but as keen a sportsman as you would wish to meet with, never missing a run if he could help it. One day, when out with the hounds, he had the ill luck to fall with his horse into a deep ditch full of water, and lay there for some minutes kicking and plunging without being able to extricate himself. Fortunately, a good Samaritan, in the shape of a labourer, ran to the spot, and with some difficulty dragged him out; but perceiving the excrescence, and imagining it to be the result of the accident, began twisting and turning it with all his might in order to remedy the mishap. Meanwhile, Tommy, half choked with mud and frantic with pain, couldn't articulate a syllable; the more he struggled, the more

conscientiously did his tormentor tug at him; at last, by a supreme effort, he got on his legs, and, with the most frightful contortions of countenance, sputtered out, "Born so, you confounded block-head, born so!"

'We shall soon be parting company,' pursued my voluble acquaintance, carefully emptying his pipe out of the window, and restoring it to his coat-pocket. 'I leave this train at Hayward's Heath, and take another. I presume you are going the whole way?'

'Only as far as Hassock's Gate,' I said.

'Ah, what the Brightonians call the "Assock." Well, then, to give you an idea of the march of intellect in those parts, I'll tell you what a clergyman of a village not a hundred miles from there related to me some ten or twelve years back. You must know that it was his habit, after examining his Sun-

day-school pupils, to hear them repeat the Belief, each boy taking a sentence in turn. One morning all went on smoothly as far as the words, "communion of saints," after which there was a dead silence. "Go on," said the pastor. "What are you stopping for?" The boys looked at each other, and said nothing. Presently, on my informant's repeating the question, the little fellow who stood next to the last speaker, summoning up all his courage, gave the usual pull to his forelock, and blurted out, "Please, sir, the boy who believes in the forgiveness of sins is sick at home with the measles!"

'Now, good afternoon, and a pleasant journey to you, for here we are.'

With these parting words, and a friendly nod, he opened the carriage-door and stumped away in the direction of a train on the point of starting for Lewes. C. H.

THREE SHOTS WITH A REVOLVER.

I.

NATURALLY, considering the nature of my calling, I have been always particularly attracted by the scores of stories—not, I am inclined to think, always based upon actual occurrences—which tell of the ingenious plots contrived by scoundrels to gain possession of other people's jewels, especially diamonds. In many cases such stories are, of course, but pure fiction. But as to those which profess to narrate facts, whether plain or coloured, I have only too much reason, from personal experience, to suspect that the real owners of jewels have, very often, more to do with their disappearance than easily-imagined brigands, swindlers, or thieves. Nevertheless, there is enough substratum of truth to make even purely-invented stories of this kind probable. Mine is not an invented story; but my reason for telling it is not so much its truth as its supremely extraordinary character. Its like, in any single detail, never happened to anybody else in the world. Were it not for this, I would assuredly refrain from adding to the pile of jewel-stories in which some jeweller's agent plays the part of hero or victim. For I was myself agent to a very great firm of jewellers in London—I need not say to whom—when there happened to myself that terrible experience, terrible almost beyond the power of words to describe, which I am, for the first time in my life, about to try to tell in words.

I remember, as if it were yes-

terday, how one of our partners called me into his private room, and said to me,

'Morris, I must ask you to be good enough to start for Paris this very evening—that is to say, by the very first possible train. You know that parure of the Princess Mouranov that we had to put into new settings?'

'Of course I do.'

'Well, you know the Princess as a customer, she is rather flighty; but she's too big a gun for us to disregard her whims. The parure is just out of hand, and was to have been delivered to her in Portland-place to-morrow morning; but—it's just like her—she's taken it into her head to set off on a voyage to America, and, an hour after she took the whim into her head, she was off, so I hear. It's just like her, anyhow. I believe she goes to Patagonia, where her diamonds—that is to say, her parure—she thinks, will be indispensable to her. I shouldn't have thought so myself, but I suppose she knows. Anyhow, she's going to spend the whole of to-morrow in Paris, and her diamonds must be delivered to her there, and *paid* for—you understand. If we don't deliver the parure, she'll never forgive us; and if she doesn't pay before going off Heaven knows where, why, we shall never forgive ourselves. You'll have to be sharp, for it doesn't follow that she'll stay in Paris a whole day because she says she will; and you'd better avoid having to follow her, if you possibly can.'

'Naturally! Where is Madame to be found?'



THREE SHOTS FROM A REVOLVER

'At a place called Les Bosquets. It's outside Paris; but here's the address written down. I needn't tell you to be cautious—'

'Why?' asked I. 'It all seems simple enough. I've only got to give the parure to the Princess—into her own hands, of course—receive the money, give and take a receipt, and come away. There will be no difficulty about the Princess's money, I suppose?'

'No. But, don't you see, I'm afraid you're still a trifle young, Morris. Those Mouranov diamonds are as well known to all the diamond-hunters in Europe—and they swarm abroad—as they are to me. Better than they are to you, by a long way. By some means or other, you may take your oath, one of those gentry will know you to have the charge of them. It's no good taking precautions against that; they'll know all the same, and precautions are only a way of putting people on the trail. Take care you go to the right house, my friend. Take care that you see the right lady. Don't eat and don't drink, however much you may be pressed, till you're safe back at your hotel. Don't shut your eyes till it's all over. If a strange woman speaks to you, cut her dead; if a strange man, knock him down. And—'

'Well, what else? But I'll take care of myself, never fear.'

'You're an unusually handsome man, you know,' said he, with a wink and a knowing smile, 'and I suppose, like all handsome men, you're a bit of a lady-killer—without meaning it, you know. A nod's as good a wink, you know; and you're not a blind horse, whatever you may be. Paris is a lively place, you know, for a man of your make, with diamonds next his heart worth thousands of pounds. It isn't the men I'm afraid of in your case; it's the women.'

Every man likes that sort of chaff; and I was really weak enough in those days to take an especial pride in what I could not help knowing to be my personal advantages. So I was in the best temper as I answered modestly,

'Well, sir, nobody knows everything about all women; but I do think I know enough about a few to guess a good deal about what the rest may be up to. I don't think I'm likely to be come over that way. And I should think this little fellow,' I added, showing him a new revolver, 'will be enough for common odds, not in petticoats.'

'Don't put yourself in a position that'll oblige you to use it,' said my employer. 'And you won't, if you keep clear of the common odds—in petticoats, you know. I must be off now. Call at my house for the parure in an hour.'

Full of confidence in my own resources, proud of the trust that had been placed in me, and altogether in a well-satisfied and fearless frame of mind, I started with the Mouranov parure by the very next train for Dover. The magnificent parure was safely packed by my employer himself before my own eyes, and I placed the packet securely in a case which I fastened round my neck and waist under my clothes with a couple of light but strong steel chains. In effect, the parure was absolutely safe from secret theft—effectually from any violence short of downright murder. I had bidden my mother and sisters a hurried good-bye, without telling even them of the invaluable charge I carried about me. And I arrived at one of the first hotels in Paris without the smallest adventure of any sort or kind. To imagine that any of the fraternity of diamond-hunters, male or female, had been watching my journey, or could

even be aware of it, was simply absurd. To all with whom I came into any slight contact *en route* I must have been an ordinary Englishman, making an ordinary trip to Paris—nothing more. And, for that matter, except with booking-clerks and so forth, I don't think I had exchanged a word with a fellow-creature all the way. That I had never once closed my eyes, I know.

II.

I HAD just ordered some refreshment after my journey before proceeding to Les Bosquets, when—

'Monsieur Alfred Morris from London?' asked one of the waiters.

'Yes,' said I, though wondering how my name could possibly be known to him, seeing that I had but just arrived, and had not even written my name in the list of persons staying in the hotel. Was my 'Yes' a piece of imprudence? I hardly know to this hour.

'A young lady,' he said, in English, 'has been waiting for one hour to see monsieur.'

A young lady, in Paris, waiting to see me! What could *that* mean? My employer's warning came instinctively to my mind. But I could not very well refuse to see her; indeed, it might prove important that I *should* see her. And certainly no possible harm could come of my seeing her in a large and crowded hotel.

'Mademoiselle waits in the *salon*,' said the waiter. So to the *salon* I went, more curious than anxious about who the young lady might be who expected me in Paris, and who knew my name so well.

She was a stranger—a young Frenchwoman, rather pretty and exceedingly well dressed, and yet with something about her that showed she did not wholly belong

to the *beau monde*, if that be the right term to use, for I don't pretend to be a French scholar.

'Monsieur Alfred Morris from London?' asked she, in precisely the same words as the waiter, but in a voice and accent which made the words sound very differently indeed, and made the girl herself look really instead of only passably pretty. Indeed, hers was one of the very sweetest voices I had ever heard.

'At your service, mademoiselle,' said I, with a bow.

She smiled; and her smile was very sweet indeed. 'I am truly fortunate,' she said. 'I was beginning to fear you would never come.'

'And may I ask, mademoiselle, with whom—'

'Assuredly, monsieur. I am Mademoiselle Lenoir, principal *Demoiselle de Chambre* of Madame la Princesse de Mouranov—'

'Ah!' sighed I, a little disappointed. It was no adventure, then—only the affair of the *parure*, after all. Still—well, considering everything, that was perhaps all the better. Adventures, till the receipts were exchanged, would certainly be *mal à propos*.

'Yes; of Madame la Princesse de Mouranov,' repeated she. 'I am in all the confidence of madame's toilette—you comprehend.' She was speaking in very good English, with an accent that improved my native language, it seemed to me. 'Madame received a telegram from London, from your firm, saying you would be here to-day. It was a careful telegram, monsieur—and that was well. It is not prudent to let all the world know what you carry—without doubt nearest to your heart, monsieur! Have I not reason—I? But madame has changed her plans—that is the *habitude* of madame. I always know what madame will not do next, for it is

always what she shall not say. She was for America last night: to-day, she is for Biarritz. But she will want the pa—the affair monsieur knows of—all the same: all the more. Even so, she was going to Les Bosquets: in fine, she is not at Les Bosquets, but at the Villa Stefania, her own little house where she goes to be alone. Ah, madame will love to be alone at times—sometimes for one whole half-hour, monsieur! But she must have the parure on the instant, and in her own hands, so I come from madame myself to conduct you to Villa Stefania without delay.'

All this was fully in accord with all that I had ever heard of the eccentric restlessness of this great Russian lady, nor had I the faintest reason, after hearing of the telegram from my employers, to doubt the simple good faith of so pretty and altogether attractive a young lady as Mademoiselle Lenoir. Still there was one obvious precaution that I ought to take, and I did take it; for I wish to make it absolutely clear that I acted in all respects as the most prudent of men could have done.

'Mademoiselle will permit me to ask,' said I, 'simply as a matter of business form, if she has the written authority—'

'Of Madame la Princesse? Assuredly,' said she, with a bright smile. 'It is good to treat with a monsieur of the prudence of monsieur!' She handed me at once a little sealed note, perfumed and gracefully written, that ran as follows:

'Villa Stefania, January 12.

'Monsieur Alfred Morris, on the part of Messrs. —, will have the goodness to accompany the bearer, Mademoiselle Lenoir, to the Villa Stefania, without any delay, there to execute the commission with which he is charged.

'STÉPHANIE DE MOURANOV.'

I have that note still, to remind me of— But the end is not yet come. Suffice it that doubt, under the circumstances, never entered my mind; nor, I dare to swear, would it have entered the reader's, had he to judge before the event, as I had to do.

I found Mademoiselle Lenoir an exceedingly pleasant companion on the way to Villa Stefania, which fancifully-named residence we reached in about an hour and a half, partly by rail and partly *en voiture*. I supposed it some eccentricity on the part of the Princesse that she did not, as she certainly might have done, send a carriage to convey us the whole way. Perhaps she was one of those people who take a pleasure in little mysteries and pointless conspiracies. Mademoiselle Lenoir talked the whole time about all sorts of things and places, and I found her sympathetic, intelligent, and singularly well informed, as well as charming. I even began to flatter myself that I had made a by no means unsatisfactory impression upon mademoiselle.

Villa Stefania, where we arrived after darkness had fallen, I could not very distinctly see; but I made out that it was a small house, probably not long built, standing alone and apart from all other dwellings in a sort of shrubbery, and approached through a tiny court past the lodge of the *concierge*. We were at once admitted, without any ringing or waiting. Mademoiselle conducted me up a staircase and along a passage, both scarcely half lighted, into a room so dark that I could scarcely see where I was, or anything at all.

'Imbeciles!' cried Mademoiselle Lenoir. 'Not a light in the *salon*, not even a candle! That is how one is served when one has twenty servants, monsieur, each with his

duties: we must have a twenty-first, to do nothing but see that the sconces shall not be empty in the *salon*—unless, perhaps, it shall be some fancy of madame, for nobody to know you are here. I will see. Monsieur is a brave man? He is not afraid of being left alone in the dark till madame shall arrive? It will be in one moment, monsieur. Madame is anxious, very anxious, for the—'

I thought my being asked to wait in pitch darkness a little odd, but I could only say,

'It is many years since I believed in Bogy, mademoiselle.'

'*Bien*. It shall not be long.' And she was gone, closing the door behind her, if my ears told truly.

Without believing in Bogy, it is not a pleasant thing to be left alone in a strange room in the dark, all the same—fancies will come into one's head, especially when the seconds grow into minutes without counting themselves on a visible watch-face, and when one has on one's person diamonds worth many thousands of pounds. Everything was all right, of course; and yet I could not help wishing that the Princess Mouranov had received me at Les Bosquets by the light of at least one candle, if not of day. And, though I was but a tradesman's *employé*, common French courtesy should not have kept me quite so long waiting for a light, even though a fine lady might not be ready to see me the very instant I arrived. I felt my way to a very comfortable sofa, on which I sat down, and waited on, waxing impatient, and feeling rather like a prisoner condemned to the dark cell. Manners forbade me to doze or whistle, and—

But impatience was soon to change into something more.

III.

WAS that sound of voices in the room or no? If not in the room, close to the room it must have been; for I heard them plainly—sometimes darkness itself will strangely sharpen our ears, and there are certain words which, once heard, sharpen them, yet more keenly.

I heard three voices. One was Mademoiselle Lenoir's. One was a strange woman's. The third was a man's.

'Neatly trapped enough,' said the last, so slowly, in the German manner, that they brought their whole significance home to my dull British ears.

'But for the rest,' said Mademoiselle Lenoir, 'what ought one to do? If he goes back to England—'

'He must not go back to England,' said the voice of the other woman—it was singularly cold, firm, and clear. 'He must not leave France; he must not leave Paris till we are safely gone. Those diamonds—'

'If the worst comes to the worst,' said the man, 'what then? We are man to man. If he does not behave himself, he will have to reckon with me. These things are awkward, because of the police. But—'

'He will not resist,' said Mademoiselle Lenoir. 'And if he does—'

I thought I heard a sigh, so sharp had my ears grown. But from whom came the sigh? Whether from Mademoiselle Lenoir or that other woman I could not tell.

'If he does,' said the man, 'be it on his own head, whatever comes. You understand me, my friend. I do not like too much blood; but if there be resistance, there must be—what there must be. He must not trace the diamonds, nor you.'

It had all passed through my ears to my sinking heart long ago. Fool that I had been to listen to a woman's story, however plausible it might seem! Some plot, invented and carried out with fiendish cunning, had brought me into a den of robbery and murder. I was to wait for death in that lonely house and that horrible dark chamber!

What, in the name of Heaven, in the name of desperate helplessness, was I to do? The voices grew confused, then ceased altogether. I was alone. Nobody knew me in Paris; nobody would miss me there. If I did not return, my employers would set me down as having run off with the jewels; my mother and sisters themselves would believe me guilty, and break their hearts and starve. Could I escape from the house? Impossible — through unknown passages and a locked door!

Instinctively I felt for my revolver, useless as it must be in a dark room. The murderer, or murderers, knowing the premises, could be upon me at any moment, and have me down before I could know of their approach; and one must have some faint light for an aim. I had known that all sorts of atrocities are even more common in Paris than in London; but how could I dream that such a doom as this, all for believing in the smooth tongue of a pretty serpent, would ever be mine? I say I felt for my revolver, though knowing all the while how vain a toy it would be now. A knife for close quarters would have been ten times its value; and that, too, would have been vain. I don't think myself less brave than other men, yet I could not help a groan of despair at the thought that I was about to be murdered so helplessly, so hopelessly. How soon would it be?

I drew out my revolver, and, in doing so, a little fusee-box, with a few wax matches in it, fell on the floor. One moment's light would be something, though the last gleam I was ever to see. I groped for the box, found it at my feet, and struck one of the matches. Heaven! what met my eyes? The gleam of flame had indeed come not a moment too soon.

Straight in front of me, coming towards me through an open door, was as evil-looking a ruffian as I had ever seen; a murderous ruffian, if ever there was one, hideously livid, and with eyes that glared towards mine. Thank Heaven for that one gleam of light! It might be enough for a straight aim. . . . No time must be lost. . . . I am no fighting man, Heaven knows. . . . But . . . I fired.

For a moment the smoke clouded my eyes. But I heard a cry. The flame from my match had not wholly died. And by its light I saw — Great Heaven! I had not had one murderer to deal with. A whole gang of brigands were upon me and my diamonds. What was to be done?

Five more brigands at least were there. Well, I dared not pray for so hopeless a thing as life; but I would at least be true to my trust, and sell it dearly. My name, my honour, might yet be saved. First to right, then to left, I fired, and fired again — twice — three times —

And then the match went out, and left me to the mercy of the robbers and cutthroats into whose hands I had been drawn by a woman's words.

IV.

SUDDENLY a blaze of light filled the room, so bright, that my eyes,

till now blinded by darkness, were more blinded still.

'What madman is here?' cried a woman's voice—that other woman's, not Mademoiselle Lenoir's. 'O! O! O! My poor, dear, beautiful boudoir! Send for the gendarmes!'

Was I alive? I suppose so, since I could still hear and see. And how can I describe the scene that I beheld?

I was in an elegantly furnished room. On my left hand, with clasped hands, gazing at me with a face full of amazement, was Mademoiselle Lenoir. On my right, looking at me with wild looks of mingled anger, despair, and terror, was a handsome lady, who resembled a queen of tragedy.

'O Amélie!' cried the latter.

'O Madame la Princesse!' echoed Mademoiselle Lenoir.

'My favourite clock!' moaned the right-hand lady.

'And three whole mir—' mademoiselle was beginning, when I felt my arms grasped tightly behind my back, and a man's stern slow voice in my ear:

'Who are you? Are you madman or brigand? What does this mean? Who are you that make havoc with the boudoir of Madame la Princesse de Mouranov? Who, I say?'

I must confess it at last! I am a little near-sighted; and, by the dim light of the match, had mistaken the sixfold reflection of myself in the panels of an octagonal room lined with large mirrors for a band of murderers.

And that talk of death and diamonds behind the wall? Well, as I learned afterwards, the Princess Mouranov was, as it seemed half the world knew, busily occupied in flying from the pursuit of a husband from whom she was trying to keep not only herself, but her famous diamonds. Her eccentric movements had baffled him for long; but the temporary sojourn of her parure with our firm had nearly put him on the traces. Read the talk by the light of this and you will understand—even the big talk of Madame's last champion, a German Baron, who did meet the Prince in mortal fight with swords, and came off second best with a gash that went through his sword-arm. Who has got the diamonds now I neither know nor care.

But as for revolvers—well, if you must keep such awkward things at all, you can't spend three shots from one better than in obeying the precept,

*'Brise le miroir infidèle
Qui vous cache la vérité.'*

Smash every lying looking-glass, whether it tells you you are a murderer, or whether—as is more common—it tells you, as my own, once upon a time, used to tell me, that I was a handsome as well as a near-sighted man. Alas, since that terrible night, no looking-glass dares to tell me that I am handsome any more. For I never saw an uglier ruffian in my life than my own double seen by the light of that fusee.

LAZINESS.

I've nothing to do ; in a hammock I swing,
And my thoughts they think—think of anything.
I fill up my pipe, and then I think
Of the waste I've made of paper and ink :
Verses and prose of no earthly use—
The scribbling mania's my only excuse—
Of the number of times I have been in love ;
Of exactly how often I've lost a glove ;
Of the people I've met and the people I've missed ;
Of how many girls in my life I have kissed ;
Of how many more I couldn't get ;
Of how many times I have been in debt.
And then to light my pipe I pause,
And think of things with smoking for cause.
I think of what I have done and seen ;
Of the man I would be and the man I have been ;
Of resolves I've broken as soon as they're made ,
Of an aimless man sinking into life's shade.
I think of all I have studied and read,
And I think of a blind man, a cripple in bed ;
I think of an idle and purposeless youth,
And I think, ' Have I found out the meaning of truth ?'
How oft I was angry, ill-humoured, and swore ;
Of how many pebbles are washed on the shore ;
Of how many actions I've done that are good ;
Of how many herrings you'll find in a wood ;
Of things that bore me ; of things that I hate ;
Of an afternoon dance which breaks up at eight ;
Of how many times I have wasted my cash,
And spent lots of money on nothing but trash ;
Of how many times I have wished you were here ;
Of how many wishes I've wished in a year.
I was smoking a pipe, unless I mistake ;
How long have I slept, and when did I wake ?

B. P. W.

OUTLINE TOURS.

BY AN OLD RAMBLER.

Those who desire to make an excursion to foreign countries on a small sum of money are generally also restricted in point of time, which is rather a dilemma. For on the Continent, and more especially in France, the quick trains are also expensive trains, to such an extent as to be prohibitive for the humbler traveller. Thus the visiting of Switzerland or Italy, seeing that they are almost invariably approached by way of Paris and Lyons, has come by too many people to be regarded as a luxury quite beyond their means. The object of this paper is to show to those who have only a fortnight, or perhaps even less, at their dis-

posal, how they may see some of the most attractive localities in Europe without having their holiday unduly eaten into by the delays which belong to cheap travelling. To take a case, Italy—that is to say, the Lago Maggiore—may be reached by a man who can do twenty or twenty-five miles' walking per diem for three days, at a cost of 2*l.* 9*s.* 2*d.* for mere riding; or if he is particular, and would find himself in Italy proper, 2*s.* 3*d.* (2.70) more will land him at Aro-
na, at the southern end of the Lago Maggiore, two or three hours' distance from Milan by rail. These are the fares, the time taken will be seen presently :

ARRIVING		£	s.	d.
	London to Antwerp (return, second, G.E.R., 24 <i>s.</i>)	0	12	0
Sunday	Antwerp to Brussels circa	0	1	6
Monday	Brussels to Basle (return, second, 2 <i>l.</i> 16 <i>s.</i>)	1	8	0
"	Basle to Lucerne	0	4	0
"	Lucerne to Flüelen	0	1	11
Thursday	Basle to Locarno	0	1	9
		£2	9	2

The most convenient way of reaching Antwerp is by the Great Eastern Railway, whose boats leave Harwich four times a week. In the summer the train which corresponds with the steamer leaves Liverpool-street at 7.10 in the evening. On the arrival of the train at Harwich, the steamer leaves for Antwerp, arriving there about nine o'clock next morning. This gives the traveller a pretty good day to look about him in Antwerp or Brussels, as the train which leaves Brussels for Basle does not start till 7.30. p.m. The

amount, 12*s.* for the passage across, is arrived at by halving the cost of a second-class return-ticket from Liverpool-street to Antwerp, which allows you to come back any day within two months, as also the privilege of using the Great Eastern boat from Rotterdam in returning home, instead of from Antwerp. This is sometimes a great convenience, as will be seen later. It may be added that the second-class accommodation of the newer boats of the G.E.R. is admirable, as good as any man need desire, especially in point of roomi-

ness, light, and ventilation. This is more than could be said of the fast steamers of this line a few years back. I am obliged to mention this, because, if one arranges to start on a given day, I do not see how he is to make sure that the steamer which is to carry him across the water shall be one of the improved pattern.*

When the traveller has arrived at Brussels he may as well take his knapsack to the station commonly known as the Luxembourg Terminus, and deposit it there, if he has any margin of time to stroll about the city. Half an hour's walking will take any one from one station to the other, but at the end of about twenty minutes the traveller should ask to be directed to the Gare de Luxembourg, as it lies down some streets to the left of the long boulevard or ascent which leads to the superior quarter of Brussels.

A few minutes before the starting of the train *via* Luxembourg, &c., to Basle, you get at the ticket office or window a *billet de plaisir*, second-class express, allowing a month. It is a little book composed of double tickets for several places such as Luxembourg, Metz, and Strasbourg (I think), where you can break your journey if so inclined. At any rate, you are interestingly reminded during the night and early morning of the incidents of the late war by seeing the names, or hearing called out, Thionville, Metz, Strasbourg, Saverne, &c., and by the train's winding amid the wooded gorges of the Vosges. It may be added that you will not hear Thionville called out in the stillness of the night, but 'Diedenhof,' local slang for Diedenhofen, the German name

for the place. The Teutons being in possession, their language prevails.

A little before ten the train from Brussels finds itself in Basle, where there is just half an hour's breathing space before the train for Lucerne starts. This brief interval is best used by getting a ticket, which can be done at once, and by getting breakfast in the third-class waiting-room, 'Wartsaal, III. Klasse.' There you will obtain for a half franc (5*d.*) coffee and the fanciful little *pains*, which are soaked in the coffee (you see them in Germany everywhere), butter also, as much as you care for.

During the ride to Lucerne a very fair diorama of Swiss scenery can be observed by looking out of the carriage-window on the westerly or right-hand side, always supposing the weather to be clear. Immediately on the arrival of the train, which takes you down to the quay, the steamer starts for Flüelen, at the other end of the lake, the only delay being caused by getting the passengers' baggage transferred from the train to the boat, which is sometimes a tedious affair from the quantity of it. However, the vessels which navigate the Vierwaldstätter See (local name for the Lake of Lucerne, the 'Lake of the Four Cantons') are splendid examples of their class, and keep their time like a clock.

Between 2 P.M. and 4.30 the traveller finds himself hurled, so to say, through some of the grandest scenery in Europe, a magnificent highland lake of most savage wildness. At the end of the voyage he is deposited on his legs, to enjoy a thorough good stretch of exactly three days and nights, which are devoted to crossing the St. Gotthard. During that time the traveller of scant leisure will have ample opportunity to shake himself clear of the grime and stuffiness of cities and railway

* The writer has since learned that the Antwerp service will be performed exclusively by new steamers; that towards Rotterdam almost so.

trains; on which account no apology is offered for, as it were, hurrying him to the scene of action, which is well worth hastening to if only the weather deign to smile. Of that of course the walking traveller takes his chance, and takes a waterproof too.

If the days are long, the balance of hours between 4.30 and sunset will suffice to bring a good walker as far as Amsteg, said to be ten and a half English miles distant from Flüelen; a very fair preliminary canter for one who proposes to trust himself to his legs mainly for conveyance during the next few days. Indeed, before twenty-four hours have elapsed from the time of leaving the steamer, if the traveller starts in pretty good time in the morning, splendid examples of the beauties of Alpine scenery, so far as they may be seen from a road, will have been obtained, always supposing the weather allows you to see anything. The writer has been over this piece of road in rain which came down, as it were, in lumps, the few crags that could be seen near at hand roaring and reverberating either with thunder or the explosion of mines. And he has come by it when the sun was tinting the early peaks into the likeness of burnished copper, wonderfully showing up the snow-clad wastes behind.

At Amsteg, the Post (or Stern), Hôtel de la Poste, is a comfortable resting-place. So much may be said, I believe, of nearly every hotel which is in the same house as the post-office. Here I may give the economical traveller a useful hint. Nearly all Englishmen, I imagine, have the idea that when there is but one hotel in a mountain village, the traveller will be made to pay—too much, that is—for his accommodation. The walking tourist will find, if he keeps his eyes open, that these

establishments have what may be called a second-class dining-room, where people of the country who come on business get their refreshment. You may be sure the Swiss don't spend what even a moderate Englishman would expect to 'shell out.' The room I speak of will very likely be only divided by a door from the superior apartment where English travellers who can afford it keep themselves select, and get waited on by maids in correct costume. As we are for the moment in Amsteg, I will try and describe the second-class or commercial room there, and what I saw in it. The room itself is twenty or twenty-five feet square. Two sides of it are occupied by long tables, with forms back and front, much as in a schoolroom. At one of these tables travellers sit down and drink their beer, wine, or cup of coffee; or a cloth is spread for them if dinner or supper be the thing required. On a third side a door opens into the host's *bureau* or office; the kitchen is opposite, across the passage. The fourth side of the room holds the door into the passage and a kind of buffet, where anything people want to drink can instantaneously be taken down from the shelves. The buffet has no counter before it, but is more like a dresser; and at the table near to the buffet the girl who attends washes her glasses or sits down to needlework in the interval of her ministrations. During the few hours I was there I had a specimen of how these home-like-looking rooms are used, sufficient, I think, to prove that a traveller of modest desires may instantly find himself among pleasant faces at each stopping-place if he will.

During the first part of my stay at Amsteg the only traveller besides myself was what we call a packman, a draper who goes

from door to door. He, part of the time, was showing the female members of the *personnel* of the establishment patterns of material for dress, making out his bill for something had previously, and so forth, they looking at first one article and then at another, and going across into the kitchen to consult, or may be to show a chambermaid in some distant settlement an attractive piece of material. Business over, or in a lull of it, the hero of the drapery store took something to eat, and very likely had a Schnapps to put him in good-humour at starting. Later on a very ordinary commercial had *his* dinner, with abundant *façons* of course. Between whiles, I think it was, the landlady herself, quite a young woman, came in, attended by her husband, to have a cup of coffee at one of the long tables in this common (in no disrespectful sense) room. She held her handkerchief to her face, so I innocently asked the landlord if madame's tooth ached. He said she had just had a tooth *arraché*, the hideous preparations for which I had seen laid out on a table *al fresco* at the back of the house.

If the traveller cannot easily reach Amsteg on the afternoon of leaving Flüelen, he will find accommodation in a village a mile or two on the hither side of Amsteg, especially now the St. Gotthard Railway is nearing completion. While the works were in full swing, the workmen swamped everything in the way of lodgings, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the writer succeeded in getting shelter for a night. From this latter place the Spitze, or an *osteria* not an hour short of it, is reached in a good day's walk. The *osteria* is but a shepherd's cottage, human life commencing on the first floor; partly, no doubt,

because of the snow in winter, and, perhaps, because the goats and their fodder occupy the *rez de chaussée*. But the traveller who does not mind mountain fare, and kind, pleasant, home-like attendance, will find it here; it is a house of call for wanderers. At the Hospice there is a very fair hotel, for those who will treat the place as a hotel; but beware how you go there, whether from choice or necessity, to get hospitality in the sense originally intended. The day's walk from Amsteg is twenty-four miles. From the summit down the other side through Airole, to Faïdo, is seventeen miles, which seem like twenty-seven, from the extraordinary winding of the road to get down the steep. The almost interminable zigzags have obtained it the name of the Ribbon-road. In Faïdo perfectly good, nay beautiful, accommodation—looking to the view of the mountains from the bedroom-window—may be had at the 'Sign of the Cross,' which, as it hangs outside the door, seems fairly ablaze in the southern sun. I know not whether the house has a name. Next day a forenoon walk of the most lovely description brings the traveller to Biasca. Thence a ride of an hour and a half brings him to Locarno, at the northern end of the Lago Maggiore. The distance by railway is about forty kilomètres = twenty-seven miles. As the fare, third class, is only 1s. 9d. (2.05), most people who have not plenty of time will prefer the railway to spending another day before reaching the famous lake. After the arrival of the midday train at Locarno, there is comfortable time for a *déjeuner*, in the open air, if you will, close to the landing-place. There you can sit and look round at the glorious scenery if the weather is fine; but you *may* have only the sight of a vaporous frame to a steel-blue mirror, *sub*

Jove frigido, even in August, and your breath may add to the mist.

If the tourist like now to look about him in this beautiful district, if he like to walk round the Lago Maggiore, he may start the same day (Thursday) and reach Canobbio in the evening. There the Orrido, a chasm through which a river rushes, is the sight. Friday, Pallanza, with its splendid prospects might be taken; also Lake Mergozzo, staying at the first place which promises well, after that, for the night. On Saturday, Macugnaga, whose valley affords unrivalled scenery, may be visited. On Sunday, a nice quiet day's walk will bring the traveller to Baveno or Stresa, opposite the Borromean islands. Monday might be given to an eightpenny ride in the steamer to Luino. Thence there is a magnificent walk to Lugano, where there might be time for an hour or two's boating. On Tuesday, the traveller must turn his face homewards. A day's walk will bring him to Bellinzona, another to Faido. Thence, reversing the journey indicated, the top of the St. Gotthard is reached on Thursday; Amsteg on Friday. Amsteg must be left early, so as catch the steamer which leaves Flüelen about eleven. By this the tourist is landed at the railway station (not the town) of Lucerne just in time to embark in the train for Basle that is arranged to correspond with the Brussels express, which arrives at Brussels in good time in the morning. During the summer season the Great Eastern boats do not leave Antwerp till four o'clock in the afternoon, so that there is abundant leisure for a stroll about Brussels or Antwerp, *plus* the journey between the two. The train between Harwich and London, which takes the continental passengers, generally arrives about seven in the morning at Liverpool-street. Thus,

if the programme here roughly sketched is carried out, the traveller will have had a good fourteen days' holiday, and a sight, at least, of Italy, including a little boating on the lakes, for less than 5*l.* 10*s.* mere travelling. The filling in of the outline must be left to the traveller himself, according to his notions of living.

Speaking of Italy reminds one that the steamers on the Lago Maggiore are governed by Roman time, which is twenty minutes earlier than Swiss time. Whence you may be sitting in perfect confidence at a *ristorazione* in Locarno (for example), close to the steamboat pier, feeling that there is yet twenty minutes or half an hour to the time of the boat's starting—by the time on shore, in Switzerland. Before a quarter of an hour is over you are at the water's side, or at the extremity of the landing-place, just in time to see the steamer backing away before paddling off. This has occurred to the writer of these lines. Part of the lake is in Switzerland, and part in Italy, which causes the confusion in the mind of a passing visitor. The *orario* of the steamboats contains a notification about the 'time of Rome,' but it is apt not to be heeded until the matter is impressed upon the traveller by an actual piece of experience.

If on the day indicated for reaching the valley of Macugnaga, the traveller will, instead, work on to Baveno by keeping to the road round the bay, after leaving Pallanza, he will gain time to see the Lake of Como and Como itself. Let him, on the morning after reaching Lugano, leave it by boat for Porlezza, which is as far as the steamers take you eastwards. From it a most magnificent walk of three or four hours conducts to Menaggio, from which Como is reached by steamer. In this way

Lugano is left at ten or eleven, Porlezza reached in about an hour, when there are four or five hours for the walk, and Como is arrived at during broad daylight. Stay there the night, and get back to Menaggio by steamer as early as you can in the morning. In this way you will twice have seen Bellaggio (or Bellagio), which is said to have the finest situation on the lake, besides the innumerable sights of beauty which a five hours' steam (there and back) will afford. From Menaggio, if time is short, take the conveyance usually there to Porlezza to catch the midday boat, which will bring you, *past* Lugano, to Ponte Tresa, at the extremity of another lake which is really part

of Lake Lugano. Thence a walk excellent (because you descend upon the Lago Maggiore) in beauty that from Luino to Lugano, and much shorter, brings you to Luino, whence the steamer must be taken so as not to miss an early train in the morning towards Biasca from Locarno, whether by getting to Locarno that night or by starting before eight the next morning from Luino.

The reader will naturally say to himself, 'This looks very well on paper, but can it be done?' Perhaps the best way of demonstrating its possibility will be to give the mere travelling expenses of two journeys which the writer made to Italy in successive years :

EXCURSION No. I. (*actually made*).

	LEAVE	ARRIVE	£ s. d.
Saturday	London	...	—
Sunday	...	Antwerp*	0 15 6
"	Antwerp	Brussels	0 1 6
"	Brussels	...	—
Monday	...	Basle (21. 16s.)	1 8 0
"	Basle	(Thun) Scherzlingen, the pier	0 5 8
"	Scherzlingen	Spiez	0 0 5
"	Spiez	Frutigen	—
Tuesday	Frutigen	Gemmi summit	—
Wednesday	Gemmi	Leuk	—
"	Leuk	Brieg by rail.	0 1 9
"	Brieg	Anonymous village on the Simplon Pass	—
Thursday	Anon. village	Anon. village beyond Sempione	—
Friday	Sempione	Villa d'Ossola	—
Saturday	Villa d'Ossola	Omegna	—
Sunday	Omegna	Stresa	—
"	Stresa	Locarno by steamer	0 1 8
Monday	Locarno	Arona	0 2 3
Tuesday	Arona	Locarno	0 2 3
Wednesday	Locarno	Biasca	0 1 8
"	Biasca	Faido	—
Thursday	Faido	St. Gotthard	—
Friday	St. Gotthard	Amsteg	—
Saturday	Amsteg	Flüelen	—
"	Flüelen	Lucerne	0 2 0
"	Lucerne	Basle	0 4 0
"	Basle	...	—
Sunday	...	Brussels	1 8 0
"	Brussels	Antwerp	0 1 9
"	Antwerp	...	—
Monday	...	London	15 6
			£5 11 11

This is rather a portentous display of fine-sounding names, and it will be found more so when the reader,

who does not know the ground, studies Murray's *Handbook* and sees what he may get for his money

* This sum is half the first-class fare to Antwerp and back by the General Steam Navigation Company's vessels, which give you a voyage of some twenty hours either way.

in the way of pictures painted by Nature's hand. It is somewhat the way, nowadays, to look upon 'Murray' as old-fashioned. No doubt they, the books, are emphatically the English gentleman's guide, in the old and best sense of that much-abused word, 'gentleman.' The writer can pay the celebrated *Handbooks* no higher tribute than this—that living during his petty rambles on a scale which most Englishmen would look upon with contempt, namely, 4s. a day,

he has yet been glad to make a Murray's *Handbook* his guide as to what was best worth seeing; not as to hotels, of course, for the choice of them was left to be settled by the whim or necessities of the moment. But when the writer has by chance hit upon a resting-place characterised by 'Murray,' the justness of the description has been found remarkable. More cannot be said of a guide than that the wants of nearly all classes are cared for in it.

EXCURSION No. II. (*actually made*).

MILES WALKED, circa	OUT.	£	s.	d.
	London to Antwerp, (return, first, G.E.R., 2L) .	1	0	0
	Antwerp to Louvain (third)	0	1	4
16	Louvain to Aerschot	—	—	—
	Aerschot to Aix-la-Chapelle (third)	0	4	0
	Aix-la-Chapelle to Cologne	0	3	0
	Cologne to Mayence (return, 8s. 1d.)	0	4	1
	Mayence to Mannheim (return, 1s. 10d.)	0	0	11
	Mannheim to Basle (third, express)	0	12	3
	Basle to Lucerne (second)	0	6	0
64	Lucerne to Flüelen (steamer)	0	1	11
	Flüelen to Biasca (St. Gotthard)	—	—	—
	Biasca to Locarno (third)	0	1	8
	Locarno to Baveno (steamer)	0	1	11
	Baveno to Arona (steamer)	0	1	10
	Arona to Milan (third)	0	3	8
	Milan to Lodi (return, third, fare 2.90)	0	1	1
		£3	8	8

HOME.

	Lodi to Milan (third, half return, 1s. 1d.; excess for second, express, 9d.)	0	1	10
	Milan to Como (third)	0	2	4
	Como to Bellagio } (steamer)	0	1	9
18	Bellagio to Menaggio }	—	—	—
	Menaggio to Porlezza	—	—	—
	Porlezza to Lugano (steamer)	0	1	0
12	Lugano to Luino	—	—	—
	Luino to Pallanza (steamer)	0	0	10
20	Pallanza to Villa d'Ossola	—	—	—
46	{ Villa d'Ossola to Simplon }	—	—	—
	{ Simplon to Brieg }	—	—	—
	Brieg to Leuk (<i>Loueche-Souste</i>) (third)	0	1	8
40	{ Leuk to Leukerbad }	—	—	—
	{ Over the Gemmi to Kandersteg }	—	—	—
16	Kandersteg to Spiez	—	—	—
	Spiez to Thun (steamer)	0	0	5
	Thun to Basle (third)	0	6	5
	Basle to Mannheim (express, third)	0	12	8
	Mannheim to Mayence (half return, third)	0	0	11
	Mayence to Cologne (half return, steamer, 8s. 1d.)	0	4	0
	Cologne to Rotterdam	0	6	0
	Rotterdam to London (half return, steamer, 2L)	1	0	0

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£6 2 8

On this occasion the steamer was late in reaching Antwerp. The writer missed the train by which

he proposed travelling to Aix-la-Chapelle. Hence the journey by rail to Louvain, and the walk to

Aerschot. Louvain is a station on the long and tedious line from Antwerp to Aix-la-Chapelle, but the writer had not seen its town-hall. Aerschot is one of the minor stations on the newer and more direct railway between Antwerp and Aix-la-Chapelle, known as the Grand Centrale Belge in familiar speech. By it some years ago you could ride from Aix-la-Chapelle to Antwerp for 3*s.*, *ein Thaler*. Now there are no *Thalers*, and the fare is not far from being doubled.

The return ticket named in the first line of the preceding list of fares is for the first-class cabin in the steamer and first class by railway. It is worth mentioning that, finding all the first-class cabins engaged on board the steamer at Harwich, the writer went forward to the second-class cabin, and

found the accommodation so good that, in returning from Antwerp to Harwich, he made for the fore cabin at once, without asking whether there was room among the better places. The second-class return fare to Antwerp being only 2*4s.*, 16*s.* may be deducted from the travelling expenses of Excursion No. 2, which brings the cost of the expedition to 5*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* This is scarcely more than has been sketched out for an excursion of much less variety.

A capital eight days' excursion may be made by those who can only allow themselves a week's absence from business, which is also one of the cheapest pieces of travelling that can be named. It is to visit the Rhine by way of Antwerp and Cologne. These are the figures :

	£	s.	d.
London to Antwerp (half return, second, G. E. R.) .	0	12	0
Antwerp to Aix-la-Chapelle .	0	5	4
Aix-la-Chapelle to Cologne .	0	3	0
Cologne to Mainz (half return, 8 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i> = 4 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i>)	0	6	1
" " " best cabin, 12 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i>)	0	6	1
Mainz to Cologne	0	6	1
Cologne to Rotterdam (third class, 6 <i>s.</i>)	0	9	1
	£2	1	7

The traveller arrives in Antwerp (as per advertisement in *Hendeschel's Telegraph*, the only referee at the moment) about ten on Sunday morning. Thence he may ride by a midday train (say 1.30*) to Aix-la-Chapelle, which will occupy about four hours. He must take care, by looking at the time-bills hanging in the vestibule of the *gare* at Antwerp that his ticket is for the line *vid* Hasselt and Maestricht. If not, the tourist may be carried to Aix-la-Chapelle, by way of Liège, at a greater expense both of time and money. Aix-la-Chapelle might be the resting-place for the night, next day

* These and other times must be ascertained from the *summer* season time-tables of railways and steamers. This is best done on the spot, and there is no difficulty about it.

taking a forenoon train to Cologne, which is a two hours' ride. On Sundays there is an extra train. After seeing the sights of Cologne, Bonn can easily be reached by rail or steamer in time comfortably to find a lodging. The prospect from the steamer's landing-place at Bonn towards and after sunset is worth a little effort to see, and is a pretty foretaste of the beauties which are in store for the coming day. Taking the steamboat which ascends the river about nine the next morning, the traveller will be moved before a series of pictures which, in their bewildering variety, have almost the effect of walking through the Royal Academy exhibition. St. Goar is a good stopping place for the night, the hotels being on the river's brink. It is reached in

about nine hours from Bonn. In the evening, or next morning early, the tourist would do well to walk up to the Rheinfels, a ruined fortress which immediately overhangs the little town. From St. Goar the passage by steamer to Bingen is a little over two hours. There the traveller may easily while away a day in the most cursory inspection of the beautiful neighbourhood. An expedition to Creuznach, half an hour distant by rail, might occupy the next forenoon, and then let the traveller take the steamer which reaches Andernach that evening. On Friday, by rising early, it will be just possible to have a glimpse of very curious basaltic caves, of a volcanic region, and of a lake which occupies what was once a crater; returning down a beautiful valley which leads to the Rhine at Brohl. If the steamer cannot be joined there, twelve minutes' rail brings the traveller to Andernach again. Joining the steamer about 3 P.M., Düsseldorf is reached at eleven. There the passengers are transferred to another boat, which arrives at Rotterdam about 2 P.M. the next day. The Great Eastern Company's steamer leaves during the summer at six. The railway journey from Cologne to Rotterdam is tedious, and costs 17s. 6d. ordinary second class, or a little over 11s. third class. If the traveller likes best to return by way of Antwerp, he will have to get a bed in Cologne and travel by railway through Aix-la-Chapelle and Maestricht the next day, so as to reach Antwerp in time for the steamer to England. The times of departure of the Great Eastern Company's boats from Antwerp are apt to be changed, according to the time of year. It is therefore worth while to ascertain beforehand. For if the beginning of your week's holiday were in Au-

gust and the end of it in September, trusting to the time-table you had started with might lose you your passage on arrival at the quay at Antwerp. This has been the experience of the writer. Moreover, the train, which, leaving Cologne in the forenoon, enables a traveller to reach Antwerp between two and three o'clock, may be second-class express, not carrying third-class passengers. In that case the scale of price will be materially disturbed.

This is the itinerary according to days:

Sunday: Antwerp and Aix-la-Chapelle are reached.
 Monday: Cologne, Bonn.
 Tuesday: (Coblenz) St. Goar.
 Wednesday: Bingen.
 Thursday: Creuznach, Andernach.
 Friday: Düsseldorf.

Our last example of an outline tour on the Continent is also the least expensive; but if the traveller is willing to walk, he may get great enjoyment and much change of scene from a tour of little cost, although what is called scenery can scarcely be offered, except on the first day's journey. There is a substantial advantage about this excursion which is in contrast with the experience of more favoured spots. The tourist returns to his labours at home in better condition than if he had been among the mountains of Switzerland or the Tyrol. The air of the Low Countries being not so dissimilar from that of our own island, the change back to the vitiated atmosphere of London is not perceived to an inconvenient extent. It is a fact notorious to medical men that many a patient comes to them who has just enjoyed his holiday among the pure air of elevated districts. His system has become accustomed to it, so that on his return to his usual habits the traveller finds himself 'downright ill,' whereas if he

had stayed at home he might have kept perfectly well.

Steamers leave Fenning's Wharf on the south side of London Bridge two or three times a week for Dunkirk, at hours which must be ascertained from the printed bills issued once a month. Passengers usually arrive at Dunkirk in good time in the morning of the next day, from four o'clock onwards, according to the hour of starting. A return-ticket, which allows a month, costs 15s. first class, and 10s. 6d. second class. The latter is not recommended for ordinary passengers, because there is more smoking in the little cabin than might be favourable to any one who was inclined to be sea-sick. The second-class cabin is greatly used by seamen travelling from one port to another. If it is a fine day a very agreeable 'run down the river' is part of the programme; and when salt water is reached the sails are set, so that a passenger by these little screw-steamers enjoys the 'sensation,' rare to a landsman, of taking passage in a vessel which sails—no mean treat for an ordinary worker indoors. The first day after landing may be given to a leisurely walk towards Cassel (France) through Bergues, a little fortified carilloned town, half a day's journey distance from Dunkirk. Cassel (= *Castrum*) is a village on the top of a hill like that of Harrow, and commands a horizon of some fifty miles' diameter. There are yet traces of the Romans to be seen. Charming roomy accommodation of the simpler sort may be had at the Hôtel de la Mairie close to the town-hall, and astoundingly cheap. Next day a good walk will take the traveller to Ypres, a fine old city, which was once as big as Leeds is now. Ypres is an interesting example of the decayed and reposeful towns of which Belgium and Flanders have

so many. The town-hall is magnificent; and the walk on the ramparts, now converted into gardens, bounded by acres of walks in meadows, where the water-lilies fringe the grim old walls, are well worth seeing. From the romantic and mediæval, another day's journey brings the tourist to Courtrai, a busy prosperous manufacturing city, in constant communication with England. Its feminine population is remarkable for its good looks. Next may be taken Tournai, a considerable fortified town; then Audenarde, familiar in English history; and then Brussels. Probably a day might be spent in Brussels, and another day in visiting the field of Waterloo, walking through the forest of Soignes. From Brussels the traveller may turn his steps to Ghent. Another day might bring him to Bruges, whence a half day's walk will be sufficient for getting to Thourout. Another easy journey will take the tourist to Dixmude, from which a good day's walk of twenty-six miles lands him once more in Dunkirk. If any of the spaces between two places should seem too great to be covered by a day's walk, the distance can be abridged *ad libitum* by taking a few miles' ride on the railway, which is never very far off. The fares are so low that more than sixpence need never be spent in this way, if the traveller makes walking his rule and to ride the exception. As to living, if economy is the object, supper, bed, and breakfast will be obtainable, in more comfortable houses than our tourist would 'use' in his ordinary life at home, for 2s. 6d. or less; and *service* has not to be thought of, because the people themselves wait on you. This accommodation is best sought in minor towns; in cities such as Bruges or Ghent, tariffs are higher, and yet very low,

according to our notions. It is suggested to the traveller to take his *déjeuner* or *dîner* in the larger cities. If he does this the distances might be arranged by map, so as to stay each night in a minor town, reaching the cities named in the itinerary given above after a morning's walk.

Before quitting the subject of outline tours one may glance for a few moments at what steamboats will do for the traveller, without quitting English territory. Ireland may be visited by means of the British and Irish Company's steamers from the Port of London, which give a voyage of seventy-six hours at an expense of 34s. first class, or 25s. second class, for return-tickets which allow two months. Dundee steamers avail for mid Scotland; return-tickets (which allow three months) are 50s. first class, including provisions, or 20s. second class. Edinburgh and the Scottish Border are within the tourist's reach by means of two services of steamers between the Port of London and Leith or Granton Pier. The London and Edinburgh Shipping Company's steamers leave twice a week, return-tickets, available for a month, 34s. first class, 24s. 6d. second class. The General Steam Navigation Company's vessels also sail for Edinburgh from Irongate and St. Katherine's Wharf, near the Tower, every Wednesday and Saturday, single fares, 22s. or 16s.; return-tickets, available for one month, 34s. or

24s. 6d. The Hull steamboats of the General Steam Navigation Company leave London on Wednesdays and Saturdays, giving a month's holiday in Yorkshire or Lincolnshire for an incredibly small sum. Every Saturday there is a steamer from London towards Liverpool, which calls at Plymouth and Falmouth. By it Lancashire and the Lake district of Cumberland are inexpensively approached; while those who prefer the beauties of Devonshire and Cornwall are carried to them; in each case deriving the benefit of a sea-voyage into the bargain, instead of a stuffy excursion train.

The Tyne Shipping Company also sends vessels twice a week from New Dundee Wharf to Newcastle. The passage is about thirty hours.

Hampshire and the New Forest are accessible by the Cork steamers which leave London on Thursdays, calling at Southampton. By them also Devonshire and Cornwall can be reached, as Plymouth is one of the stations.

Another way to Hampshire is by the British and Irish Steam-packet Company's vessels, which call at Portsmouth. Return-tickets, allowing two months, cost 15s. first class, or 10s. second class. Lastly, one of the pleasantest excursions out of London is by the General Steam Navigation Company's paddle-steamer from London Bridge to Yarmouth, a twelve hours' sail.

A STORY OF THE BIARRITZ SEASON.

THE summer season at Biarritz, as so many of my readers know, begins on the 10th of July. Biarritz has attained the grand and remunerative ambition of a watering-place—that of being in season all the year round. It has a distinct summer and winter season. In the winter the little town is like an English village. There is a regular English colony, with its parish church, its shops, its club, its promenade. The carriages of many peers and commoners roll through the lanes, as they might through the suburbs of London or Paris. The English and Americans entirely dominate and possess the place. Then, as the weather warms, they fall off, but never entirely so. There is always the great Atlantic and the fresh upland breezes. The big houses are shut up, but some residents stay on, and there is a constant stream of tourists and invalids on their way to the Pyrenean watering-places. On the 10th of July the formal summer season begins. A few days previously, the place is comparatively empty. A few days after, it is comparatively full. A week or two later, and the place is crowded, and prices are trebled, quadrupled, quintupled. Last year, as soon as the season began, the place grew brilliant. The presentation of the national flags on the 14th of July threw a wave of excitement into every municipality of France. That presentation of flags heralded that renewed spirit of military aggrandisement that has led on to the appropriation of Tunis. On

the first evening of the season the square was thronged with promenaders and listeners. The English, Americans, and Russians were going, or thinking about going; but the French were pouring in from Paris and the departments, and the Spaniards were crossing the frontiers. The finest houses of Biarritz belong to some Spanish-American people, who have made their fortunes in South America and spend a part of the year here.

I sometimes wonder why they have come from Spain, which has a Biarritz of its own in St. Sebastian. I had the idea that some of them were better known in Spain than in France. I had come from St. Sebastian myself, a much finer place, in the heart of the tumbled Asturian Sierras and close to the dividing heights of the Pyrenees, with bold coasts and headlands, broad inland reaches of tidal water, picturesque villages, splendid river scenery. It is all a matter of fashion. Fashionable people love to congregate themselves within exact limits, an area within which everything can be inspected. I will certainly say for Biarritz that I have never seen more exquisite and beautiful toilettes; and I entirely share the opinion that 'beauty should go beautifully drest.' Biarritz, in its summer season, always wears the gay and splendid costumes of a *fête champêtre*. No wonder that the French prefer to every other their own watering-place with their own ways. The Englishman likes rough comfort and free-

dom from toilet duties; but the Frenchman is all the same at the coast as if about to consume his absinthe—which also consumes him—on the Boulevard des Italiens. The differences are seen in those of the Royal and Imperial families. Our own gracious Queen loves retirement, and seeks it in the woods and glens and secluded shores of Osborne. But here at Biarritz the Villa Eugénie is overlooked on every side, and the whole life of the Empress in the happy days when she used to stay here was lived in public.

A very good book to carry about one and read in the retired coves is Gleig's *Subaltern*, the youthful work of the gentleman who became the biographer of Wellington and the Chaplain-General of the Forces. It is curious, as we turn away from the Grand Casino and the promenade, to look at his account of Biarritz at the time when the Peninsular army passed into France. He even thinks it necessary to inform his readers that 'the little town of Biarritz stands upon the seashore.' 'It was, and no doubt is now,' he goes on to say, 'a remarkably pretty village, about as large, perhaps, as Sandgate, and built upon the very margin of the water; and, above all, it was, and I trust still is, distinguished as the residence of two or three handsome females.' It became my lot in life to verify the observation of this distinguished writer, only instead of two or three handsome females one might speak of two or three hundred, or, in the height of the season, of two or three thousands. Mr. Gleig's young ladies might, however, have been the grandmothers of some of those whom I saw last season, one of whom stands, and for ever will remain, supreme in my memory.

The scene of my little story—such as I have to tell—is laid almost immediately beneath that Imperial villa: a certain exciting incident of this season, which, as will afterwards be seen, led to very important practical results. In my own history that villa will always be a cynosure and landmark. Let me say that, in spite of the flags, the public feeling at Biarritz is distinctly Imperialistic. They could not judge Manlius within sight of the Capitol, and they cannot forget the gracious and beautiful Empress within sight of her villa. Still it is a very plain one, by no means so sumptuous as those of the Spanish-Americans to whom I have referred. It is her own still—at least, till the other day; but it is all lonely and deserted, save for those in charge of it. The *intendant* who looks after it was pointed out to me—a fine old soldier maimed in the wars. Just below the villa are the big baths, where you attire yourselves for the big billows of the Bay of Biscay, which even on the calmest day roll in vast and grand, and with a power that is overwhelming to those unaccustomed to their onset.

My visit to Biarritz was a chance one, or what we poor mortals choose to call chance. I had been staying well content at Bayonne, pleased with the arcaded streets, the old and new cathedral, the river Adour, and all the associations of the Wellington *Despatches* and Napier's *History*. Considering myself well off, I did not care to be better off, but that irresistible tide of fashion drew me to the gay watering-place. I went the six miles by the new local railway from the pretty little station, the mention of which is unaccountably omitted by *Murray*, and is hereby commended to its

editor. The very first day that I was there, about half-past six in the evening, I met—not an uncommon circumstance for men between twenty and thirty—I met my Fate.

She was a bright and brilliant girl, but as I do not intend to identify her, I will only ask you to draw the portrait of your own Fate, and suppose that mine is very much after her style, only handsomer. I had gone to dine at a big *table d'hôte*, having secured my place in an early part of the day. During the day I explored the place, and, indeed, there is not so much of it but its exploration is effectively done within a few hours. There was the lighthouse to be visited, and the casino to be done, and the main winding street to be shopped in, the bathing-places looked at, and the path above the cliff and the path below the cliff to be promenaded, and what I think the most picturesque bit of Biarritz—the old port where at one time the whalers used to come in from the southern seas—not to mention that I had to contemplate the curious mingling of ladies and gentlemen swimming, or learning to swim, and conversing and flirting at the same time. Then I got back to the *table d'hôte*, where during soup and fish I gazed in speculative mood on the two or three empty chairs nearest to me. Then three persons entered the room, evidently father, mother, and daughter. I made quite sure that, with my usual ill-luck, the parent-birds would come next to me, and that the young lady would prove the last of the quartette. But to my great content it so happened that the young lady was seated next to me. She had the divine gift of graciousness, gave back query and comment, and, seeing that I was a stranger, tried to make me understand the place and the people.

She spoke of the big houses, and regretted that some of them were only open for two or three months in the year.

I told her of various great houses I had seen.

'Yes,' she said, 'those best houses, belonging to the little Spanish colony, are only open for about two months; and such fine gardens! It almost seems a pity that there should be a waste of space at the time when Biarritz is so crowded.'

Then she asked me if I had seen the English houses.

'Yes, they have been pointed out to me,' I answered—'such as the Duke of Abercorn's, and Lord Hampton's, and Lord Aylesbury's.'

'O, there are a number of them. In the season we get visits from some of your most famous public men. Lord Salisbury, after the last General Election, stayed here for a time; and one Sunday lately, when I was at our nice new church, to my great surprise the Archbishop of Canterbury was there, and gave us the blessing.'

Then we talked of the country around Biarritz—how English-like it was; how the desolate Landes country between here and Bordeaux, where the poor people used to walk on stilts, had been reclaimed by the pine-woods, and had now the neatest and most picturesque station on the Ligne de Midi.

'But O, those Spanish mountains across the Bay! Of course they are not so grand as the Pyrenees; but we get such a lovely view of them from here, and they seem quite to have seized my imagination.'

'I was among them in the winter,' I replied, 'but it was so mild that there really was no winter. I used to shoot woodcock in the valleys, and the police used to make me turn out my bag and pay

a tax on every woodcock I had shot.'

The worst of this *table-d'hôte* intercourse is its thoroughly transitory nature. You meet as ships at sea, and the chances are that you never meet again. It was with a feeling of the thoroughly unsatisfactory nature of such acquaintanceship that I surveyed the Luxmores—such I had ascertained to be the name—give a civil bow, and retire to their own apartments.

But she was my Fate. I felt it strongly at the time, and I have never lost the impression. I seemed to tread on air as that night I took my lonely walk by the moonlit sea, hearing the music crash afar off, and the indistinguishable murmur of the crowd. All night long I was 'reading her perfect features in the gloom,' as one of Mr. Tennyson's lovers did under very similar circumstances. The acquaintance was to be deepened next day in a curious and remarkable manner,—and never to cease.

In all my travels I have the good or bad taste to adhere to the English hours of feeding—that is to say, that I have a solid English breakfast at nine, and lunch at half-past one. The result is that I am quite free during the time that people are taking their *déjeuner*. I resolved to devote the period between noon and lunch-time to bathing. Everybody had gone in to feed, and I perceived that I had this part of the Bay of Biscay entirely to myself. No doubt the bathing at Biarritz is admirable. I know of none better. There are grand sands, firm, hard, broad, like a marble pavement. But even here there are drawbacks which require precaution. For instance, in a remarkably safe cove, where a rope is hung across the chasm, a

man I know was carried out to sea on a rapidly-shifting quicksand. On the *plage* here there is, perhaps, no such danger; but still there are cross-currents, and when all is peaceful and sunshiny on the shore there may be a mighty storm raging a thousand miles away on the Atlantic, and sending from afar huge sudden waves.

To speak mildly, I am not a very good swimmer; to speak severely, I am an execrably bad one. Then, in the excitement of the bathing, I am apt to go out further than either my strength or my science warrants. I had hardly calculated the force of those heavy rollers from the ocean. When I had wrestled with them for a time a feeling of fatigue came over me. Perhaps I was rather faint from the want of that lunch which was now rapidly becoming due. But there was a further peril, of which I was utterly unaware, and of which I ought to have been warned at the big baths where I had assumed my aquatic attire. They have coloured flags, indeed, to indicate safety or danger; but these are of no use to the uninitiated. Though the tide was coming in there was a strong current, which might rapidly take me out to sea. By the time that I had stayed in the water for an injudiciously long time, I felt the force of this current. At first I thought nothing of it; but presently I found, with some alarm, that I had not strength to resist it. The next quarter of an hour was one of the most unhappy that ever belonged to that division of time. I felt myself drifting away unresistingly into the ocean. There was not a single fishing-boat in sight. Afar I saw the lighthouse on the hill; and afar the summit of the Eugénie villa beneath it, looking, as I thought, my last look at earth and sky. Then I closed

my eyes ; and although I cannot say that all the events of my past life rushed through my mind in a moment of time, as I am told has been the case with other people of drowning experience ; yet I did think that my life had been poorly spent, and I only wished it had been worthier.

'I have lived my life, and that which I
have done
Do thou within thyself make pure.'

But just at this moment a pair of magnificent sapphire eyes met mine, a beautiful white hand clasped mine. Was it Flying Zeo of the Coming Race, or Naiad of the Ocean, or Angel from heaven ? It was Ethel Luxmore, who had been bathing with some young ladies, and had observed me swimming out in the direction where she knew there was this current. She had endeavoured to signal

me, but I had not observed ; and had called out, but of course I had not heard her voice in the dash of the waves. Then the kind-hearted courageous girl swam out and seized my hand, just as I was about to sink through exhaustion. With very little difficulty she piloted me out of the current, and soon my feet touched the firm sands.

How wonderful is the generous heart of woman ! I wished to offer her the life which she had saved—a poor unworthy one, indeed, and which I could hardly hope that she would accept. But the very fact that she had saved my life gave her an interest in it, made her at last willing that she should adore and bless it. To use Coleridge's strain :

'And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous bride.'

HOW WE USE MUMMIES.

'STEP behind here a moment, sir ?' said my friend, the artists' colour-man ; 'you might like to look at this.'

And there, in the little room behind the shop, on the table, lay a complete mummy in perfect preservation, down to the gaudy burial-cloths wrapped round him ; only a portion of the right leg was wanting.

'So you do a little business in curiosities,' I said to him.

'Well, no, sir, not exactly ; not but what he's a curiosity, and a fine one too. Why, Mr. —, you know—him that paints the Egyptian pictures—he was here looking

him over, and he says he can tell by the clothes and the writin' how he was some big swell—a high-priest, I think he said, or maybe a king.'

'But did you pick him up a bargain, then ? I suppose he's for sale ?'

'No, sir—that is, he's for sale and he's not for sale ; we uses them in the trade.'

'Use them ! what do you mean ?'

'Well, I'll tell you, sir. You know the brown colour called mummy, I've often sold it you ; well, that's what it's made of.'

'What, out of the cloth and fibres ?'

'No, sir, out of the body of him. You see his face there; well, that's about the tone; we break him up as we want him. I've ground up his right leg already; he's all good, head and all.'

'Ground him up! Good heavens, good heavens! You grind up dead men to make paint with!'

'Well, it ain't like a dead man quite, you see, sir; he's been like that three or four thousand years, maybe; mostly spice, I reckon; and it's a fine solid colour they make. We has a lot of 'em over, about seven pounds they cost us mostly, delivered in the Borough.'

Then came a shrill cry of 'Wanted in the shop!' and this vendor of human pigments returned to his counter.

Could it be true that this portly, white-aproned product of civilisation was about, nay, had actually begun, to desecrate this miracle of time, this gaudily-attired, blackened human shape that had endured four thousand years to be the monument of the spirit which it once contained, a life that had been a great one in a great nation, a ruler among men, perhaps an interpreter of the gods?

Was he one of that great company of priests, bound together in the practice of mysterious rites and the monopoly of human knowledge, those mathematicians and astronomers of the ancient world, who combined with the highest

wisdom then attained the superstition of the strangest faiths,—who on the moonless nights at Sais commemorated the sufferings of Osiris, that god whose name the old historian dared not mention, who overcame the spirit of evil, and died for the triumph of the good?

Standing before this blackened clay with the hard straight features, the thin lips and long sunken eyes, how it all rushes back on the memory!—that tale of Horus, the last of the sons of heaven who sat on an earthly throne, and Mem, the first of the human dynasty; the legend of the ibis and the phoenix bird, of Sesostris the mighty conqueror, and Mycerinus, who made six years into twelve. What profit that you had the rich man's funeral, that they washed your body in the palm-oil, filled it with myrrh and cassia, and laid it in the nitre the full tale of seventy days? What profit that so many tides of war, from Cleopatra to the Pyramids, have passed and left you sleeping; faiths changed and empires passed away, but you outlasted them? Was your life too prosperous that such a Nemesis should come upon you after all these years? For now you lie in the barbarian's back parlour, to be ground to powder and made up in tubes and sold for sixpence! Such is the irony of Fate.

THE LAND OF 'THE PIRATE.'

An Angling Holiday in Shetland.

BUT is Shetland really worth going to see? Over and over again, as the returning summer calls up holiday dreams and plans, is this question put to any one supposed to be capable of giving the least information on the subject. Or at other times the query may take the form of: 'I am thinking of running up as far as Shetland this season; is it worth while to take a rod with me?' As regards the latter question, we will consider presently the prospect of combining a little quiet sport with your Northern trip, merely remarking here that very much depends upon what you expect, as one man manages to get a good deal and is pleased, where another gets next to nothing and grumbles. But as to the first question, whether Shetland is worth going to see—most certainly it is, if only for the purpose of visiting one of the quaintest and quietest parts in all Great Britain, and a country that Sir Walter Scott, with all his intimate acquaintance with the different localities, and wealth of varied material to be found throughout Scotland, considered worthy to be selected as the scene of one of the most popular of all his beautiful romances.

Every week throughout the summer months two steamers leave Granton for Shetland. One starts on the Tuesday morning, and arrives at Lerwick on Wednesday evening; the other starts on Friday morning, and arrives on Saturday evening. The boats are advertised to start at various hours from before breakfast to nearly

midday, according to the state of the tide. They are generally pretty full at Granton, being largely patronised by people going just as far as Aberdeen; for they only take eight hours or so to get there, which is much about the same time that the train does, while, of course, the expense is less. Besides that, the sail from Granton to Aberdeen is a very charming one on a fine summer day, and undoubtedly more pleasant and lively than what the old salt termed 'daudlin' along in they blanked trains.' Out from Granton Harbour you pass Inchkeith, the Isle of May, and the little red-tiled villages on the coast of Fife; then past the coasts of Forfar and Kincardine, you come to Aberdeen. Here you always stay for two or three hours, and this time cannot well be better employed than by dining at one of the numerous and good hotels with which Aberdeen is stocked. And, after all, you may be a very good sailor, but a dinner on shore is better than a dinner on board, unless under extremely exceptional circumstances. Starting thus fortified from Aberdeen, you smoke round the warm funnel till the spirit moves you to turn into your berth. The chief deterring elements to a quiet night are when gentlemen of the cattle-droving and similar persuasions meet together on board in any quantities, and over the native white wine of the country discuss, with language emphatic, the respective qualities of various men and beasts. This, and a stoppage at Wick in the middle of the night,

when there is, at times, a considerable amount of banging and thumping about overhead on deck, are the only things that need thus far render life the least of a burden to even the most sensitive of mortals. If fine, you are not likely to be late in coming on deck next morning, and getting the first glimpse of the Orkney Isles. The grand rock scenery, the wild cliffs rising straight up from the sea, the myriads of sea-fowl, the divers and cormorants in all directions on the water, the sea-breeze that always seems to blow so fresh up here, and presently the bay of Kirkwall sparkling in the sunshine of a summer morning, little white sails scudding about here and there, and the rougher and more dingy-looking fishing-boatsmaking slowly for the harbour, all combine to complete a scene lifelike and characteristic of a hardy island race, whose work and play alike are found on the sea.

'His young eyes opening on the ocean
foam

Had from that moment deemed the deep
his home.'

Here you can devote your time on shore to visiting St. Magnus' Cathedral and the old ruins of the Earl's Palace. These are well worth more than merely a passing visit; however, as we could not do justice to them here, it would not be satisfactory to dwell as briefly as we should be compelled to do on these monuments of by-gone Orcadian grandeur. Guide-books, not to mention guides innumerable, will easily be found to give all, and possibly more than all, you want to know about them. For the rest, there is not very much else to be seen in Kirkwall, which is a pretty, quiet, clean-looking little town, swept alternately by soft winds and boisterous gales off the cold North Sea.

In about a couple of hours or

so, the steamer bell gives you plenty of notice that it is time to be once more on your way to the Shetland Isles. You have now about eight and a half hours' sailing before you reach Lerwick, so can now look round and contemplate those who are to be your fellow-passengers for the time. About the same in number, probably, as when you went into Kirkwall, a good number going no farther; but in turn you have picked up others, who have been either waiting at Kirkwall since the last steamer, or have crossed the Pentland Firth from the mainland, and so on by Stromness. There are English and Scotch tourists, sometimes a stray foreigner or so, Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates, anglers of various sorts and descriptions, some returning to well-known and favourite haunts, others going up for the first time 'on spec'; tourist clergymen, sometimes a good many ladies, and, of course, it goes without saying, the usual complement of commercial gentlemen. Most people would wonder how on earth it pays these gentry to go in such numbers up to Shetland and throughout its northern isles; and, as a matter of fact, it does not, as one candidly admitted to me. But then it keeps any one else off that beat, which, doubtless, is a matter of intense satisfaction in these days of close competition. Half-way between Orkney and Shetland you pass the Fair Isle. This is chiefly historical as the scene of the shipwreck of part of the Duke of Medina Sidonia's fleet in 1588; and to this day it retains traces of the visit of its Spanish guests, in the peculiar pattern and colour of what is known as Fair Isle hosiery, which constitutes its chief special industry. The crew are said to have remained there against the wishes of the inhabitants; if so,

the Fair Islander of the sixteenth century must have been a different sort of person from his descendants of to-day, who are conspicuous among other virtues for their simple-minded kindness and hospitality. But even as late as two centuries after that there existed a very marked feeling against the saving of drowning men, originally induced either by the wish that there should be no survivor to tell tales or interfere with their right of wreckage, or possibly the prudent one of not increasing the number of mouths, already probably amply sufficient for their scanty supply of meal. At least these are the reasons suggested, and doubtless correctly so, by the author in his notes to the *Pirate*. And there is no cause to doubt but that the Fair Islanders were as good honest wreckers, when they got the chance, as the inhabitants of the rest of those northern isles, or that they less devoutly uttered the kindly prayer for 'mair wrecks ere winter.' A story is there given which fairly illustrates the spirit in which such a business was regarded.

After the commissioners had placed lighthouses on the Isle of Sanda and the Pentland Skerries, a gentleman expressed surprise at seeing the farmer of one of these isles in a boat with a very bad pair of sails. 'Had it been His will,' said the man, 'that light had not been placed yonder, I would have had enough of new sails last winter.' An affected deference to Providence so inconsistent with the sentiment of the speech, which may perhaps find its parallel in more recent times in the pious telegrams of a certain warlike Emperor. Not very often, alas, is the crew saved of a vessel wrecked upon the Fair Isle; and many a one never heard of again has been dashed to pieces in the dark

against the pitiless rocks that rise straight up from the middle of the sea. There was a talk a year or two ago of attempting to mitigate the dangers that arose from its peculiar position, by erecting a lighthouse on some conspicuous spot on the island. To-day, perhaps, it looks innocent enough, with the sun glinting on its little houses, and lighting up its green fields and gray rocks, while from the only spot where a boat can land on the island one puts off as the steamer approaches, sharp at both ends and looking anything but seaworthy—indeed, a mere cockleshell of a thing as it tosses on the swell, though the very reverse is said actually to be the case. As may be supposed, there are not many passengers to land or pick up here; a stray visitor with more than the usual amount of energy in getting into out-of-the-way places, and a few times in the year a clergyman who makes his way there to perform any marriages and baptisms that may be required. On the Sunday the resident schoolmaster, I understand, conducts the ordinary services. Altogether it can scarcely be called a gay place, and most people would probably think not specially attractive. But passengers or not, there is one thing that is never forgotten, and that is to collect all the newspapers on board that can be got, tie them up in a bundle, and pitch them over to the boat that puts off from the shore. The Fair Islanders love news as well as their neighbours who live in the busy world, and these papers are highly appreciated by them, and go the round of the various houses.

A few hours later and you are in sight of Sumburgh Head, and soon afterwards are pitching in the 'roost,' where, owing to the furious tide that runs there, you may usually reckon on a little bit of a



'Really, you utterly—quite?'

See the Vase.

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THE STRANGEST JOURNEY OF MY LIFE.

I AM about to recount a story which will appear in the highest degree romantic and improbable. My readers, however, will not be slow to detect the solid basis on which this narrative reposes. It will recount the longest and the oddest journey, or series of journeys, which I ever took in my life. It will be seen also that it was a journey crowned with very happy and triumphant results.

My readers will accuse me of being a person of a peculiarly sentimental and susceptible nature. They will look upon it as a tale of unparalleled and unheard-of folly. I have too much humility of character to disavow the charge. I, however, salve my conscience through the fact that the sweetest of beings, by whom this imputation could be most effectively brought, has entirely forgiven me. Also, if there is any truth in the adage that those may laugh who win, I may venture to tell my story with a laughing heart.

There is this additional extenuation—that, at the time my story commences, I was in a weak state of health, and that my brain was the weakest part of me. I had been going abroad in the diplomatic service, for which I had a

nomination, but for which also it was necessary that I should pass a severe examination. There was no competition, to be sure, but the hardest of competitive examinations could scarcely have been more severe. Now my whole moral nature has always been thoroughly opposed to the system of competitive examinations. All my previous line of life had been opposed to it. I knew Paris and Parisian society thoroughly. I was familiarly acquainted with the chanceries of two or three embassies. I flattered myself that in all essential points I should make as good a diplomatist as any of them—much better than two or three fellows whom I could mention neither so good nor so good-looking as myself.

Nevertheless, there was a frightful quantity of work to be done: international or public law, all modern history, all the treaties of all the countries, not to mention languages and literature. Now I had always been a boating, yachting, cricketing man, and to take me out of the fresh air and nail me to my books for ten hours a day was an extreme instance of cruelty to animals. The animal nature succumbed. The spirit was will-

ing, but the flesh was weak. I passed my examination, but very soon after that victorious examination I was taken ill. I got wet through one day. If my whole constitution had not been thoroughly undermined by that process of examination, as injurious as Spanish or Italian blood-letting, I should have thrown off the effects of the rain as easily as a dog or a duck. I had an attack of fever, and the fever flew to my overwrought brain, and became brain-fever. By the advice of my physicians I applied for and obtained furlough for nine months. I wanted rest and change of scene, so they said, and I went down to stay a little time at Clifton, where I had friends.

I had one friend in particular, who will figure in this unvarnished narrative, and whom I beg to introduce to my readers under the somewhat imposing title of Lord George Erskine. But, bless your hearts, he was no lord at all. George Erskine was no more the son of a duke or marquis than he was the son of a gun. But his parents had the devotion of the British Philistine for Debreit. They hit upon a plan for making their son a lord. They adopted the queer plan of having him christened Lord George. Their ostensible reason was that their cub had expectations from a distant connection. I don't quite believe that statement. At any rate, in that case Lord George Erskine never came in for Swift's beatitude, 'Blessed is he who expecteth nothing, for he shall not be disappointed.' Certainly, to judge by his chronic impecuniosity, Lord George had never come in for anything good. But we called him the noble lord, the peer, the baron, the right honourable, and so on, at all which terms poor Erskine was greatly flattered. If anybody

was taken in and called him 'my lord' his face was perfectly funny from delight. If he was spoken of as an esquire, he would explain that every lord by courtesy was only an esquire legally. We all had our little joke at him. He had thought fit to attach himself to me, to say the truth, in a somewhat parasitic manner. I had not his advantages of social rank; but then I had the vulgarian advantage of a good deal of ready money. When I state that my official salary from a grateful country would be 150*l.* per annum, and that would not begin until I commenced my duties as an *attaché*, and that it would be necessary to spend a good many hundreds in order to carry out the idea of the office, it will be seen that it was really necessary that I should have a good deal of money. Erskine was a capital fellow to fetch and carry. I never met any poodle who did it better. He had no serious aims and interests in life, but had taken it into his head to hold quite a doggy attachment towards me. If he found me out he would stand like a terrier outside the door of my Oxford rooms until such time as I should return. I think he was alive to his own interests, but I am also convinced that he had mine at heart as well. I had invited him to come and be my guest for a month or six weeks' holiday. Of course I should pay all his bills, and had also tipped him a cheque.

There are certain mental and spiritual states closely dependent upon bodily states. As people say, I was as weak as a rat. Of course there is all the difference in the world between getting well and getting ill; but as there is an equinox in spring and autumn, so there is an exact parallel of bodily condition in the periods of disease and convalescence. My illness had

been very serious, and I gathered health but slowly. I was weak, if you will, mentally as well as physically. I could not read a noble passage in a book but my eyes filled with tears. I could not even read of an accident in the newspapers but I realised it in a morbid fashion. I found myself endeavouring to write long loving letters to my friends, but failed to finish them, and commenced one or two sonnets, but did not possess sufficient intellectual energy to turn them off with the true Italian correctness. But I seemed to hear every sound with preternatural acuteness. My soul drank in with delight the beauty of the sunshine and shadows, of the opening flowers, of the gleaming waters. I would often have fits of long dreamy meditations. I am bound to say that George Erskine was very kind to me; he watched and knew my moods and ways, and never interfered with me unless it was for my own good. Not being strong enough to walk, I was wheeled about the downs in a bath-chair. And in the early summer those downs and cliffs were lovely indeed. I shall never forget the long arcaded path to the fountain, the mural walls of the tidal Avon, the suspension-bridge so lightly poised aloft, and the Leigh Woods in their abundant leafiness on the further side. I was to take steel and quinine and to be in the open air as much as possible; and though I walked and drove occasionally, the bath-chair was my usual mode of taking the air. I was especially enjoined to avoid all fatigue. So two or three hours were spent every morning on that springy turf, wandering away over the cliffs and Durdham Downs as far as Cook's Folly, and on the high-roads beyond, where past the estuary Avon I saw 'that broad water of the west' and the

blue outlines of the Welsh hills on the other side of the Severn sea.

One day my chair had been brought to a stand very near the Observatory. Thence there was a wide panoramic view over the Somersetshire hills. I had a volume of Browning in my hands, but my thoughts had wandered from my book as I watched the landscape, and the sense of the greatness and awe and mystery of things gathered moodily about my soul.

And there came up the little path a young lady leaning on the arm of an elderly gentleman.

A glance was cast at me. Indeed, I had all the appearance of an invalid, although the tide of health was returning, as surely as at that very moment hundreds of feet below there was a slight stir on the muddy stagnant waters of the Avon, which prophesied that they would soon fill their urn within those western hills.

The glance which I obtained revealed to me one of the sweetest and fairest of faces. I do not know whether it was just the beauty of the face, though I have now learned to look on it as the most beautiful of all faces; but there was something so spiritual and kind in the look, so courteous and graceful, such sapphire eyes, such dignity and womanliness of feature, that I felt as if all the strength and sweetness of the coming summer were gathered in full affluence around me. The magic touch of a new-born feeling concealed the fountains of life, and I felt a rush of new emotion and power throughout my being.

They rapidly descended the path, and I suppose the old gentleman, since he could no longer see me, forgot that I might be able to hear; but I heard him say, 'That young man does not look

as if he were very long for this world.'

And tones were wafted back full of pity and sympathy that thrilled me to the heart.

'O, you must not say that! Poor fellow, I hope he may get over it.'

This little bit of dialogue impressed me much. I began to realise a dim fear, which I know had been entertained, that my sharp illness might prove a chronic trouble which might darken and shorten my days. But the gentle words which I had heard bore infinite balm and healing. And all my soul went out to meet that lovely face, those kindly accents. 'And if ever I do recover,' I breathed to myself, 'that angel and no other shall become my wife, if I can only win her.'

I fell into a kind of vague dream, from which I was aroused by a remark of Erskine's, that the young party wasn't half a bad-looking girl. I need hardly say that I rebuked him for his unseemly flippancy. But none the less I felt that my hour was come. I had rushed upon my destiny, I had met my fate. That much-derided event, love at first sight, had really befallen me. You might abuse such a notion, you might argue against it, you might disprove it; but there it was, an ultimate fact which you could not disprove, and which you could not get over. I never wish to deride such a fact. Indeed, why should I? I am glad that there are persons to whom such happiness comes; and I think those are to be pitied who have no such experience. To me it was a blessed experience. It came just at a time when my destiny needed to be guided into a fresh course, when such a bright and absorbing interest could save me. A new star arose on the horizon of my life.

Each morning awoke with a freshened interest in life; the opening summer, with its melodies and perfumes, seemed to harmonise with this fresh chapter of my life. My thought was, 'If I could only find her! if I could only find her!' But although I was always moving about Clifton, it seemed destined that the fair vision crossed my path no more.

One day my chair was being wheeled along the Mall at Clifton, with my faithful and noble friend, Lord George, by my side, when his lordship drew up suddenly, and made the following observation:

'By Jove, that's my pretty girl over again!'

The chairman, trained to stop when any occasion of interest turned up, came to an immediate pause.

There could be no mistake at all about the portrait. It was that of the young lady of whom I had obtained a passing glimpse on the downs. It was an excellent portrait, a real triumph of the photographer's art. But its fidelity to that passing glimpse which I had obtained was the wonderful charm of the portrait to myself. How commonplace and uninteresting seemed all the other photographs compared to this! I did not stop to consider that there might be other persons in the world to whom some other photograph might have a special attraction, and, compared with this, even this adored photograph of mine might seem commonplace and uninteresting. And yet, on second thoughts, I cannot conceive that there can be any people so thoroughly dense and unappreciative that they could not see the surpassing absolute loveliness of this peerless face.

I took Lord George's arm and strolled into the shop.

'You have some capital portraits in your window.'

'Yes, sir. We have a specialty for very correct portraits, sir. We have all the *élite* of the place, both residents and visitors. We have got the bishop of the diocese, sir. Uncommon well he takes, to be sure. When Midhat Pasha was here we took him, and uncommonly pleased he was; had never seen anything like it before.'

'Would you kindly bring out those in that pane of glass?'

A shopman handed down the photographs, and I had the delight of leisurely examining the photograph.

'And who is this?' I inquired; and I am afraid that I betrayed eagerness and anxiety in my voice and manner.

'I am sure I don't know,' answered the insensate and insensible shopman. 'Jim, do you know?' addressing a clerk or another of the assistants who was at the desk.

'We may not have the name,' said the photographer. 'They came in and was very pleased with the one that was taken, and ordered a dozen negatives. The young lady took uncommon well; and I thought it so good a photograph, that I kept one back to put it in the window. It is just possible that we might have the name in the ledger, where the dozen were to be sent.'

'You would greatly oblige me if you would refer to your books. I have a particular reason for wanting to know.'

The good-natured clerk referred to the ledger.

'I can't make quite sure, we have had so many people taken of late. I rather think that this is the one, "General Bulstrode, Clifton Down Hotel."'

There was an obvious absurdity in connecting this fair young face with a weather-beaten old general.

'Perhaps it was Mrs. Bulstrode,' said the unfeeling Erskine. 'Such

things happen, we know. December and May, and that style of thing.'

I repudiated the unworthy suggestion. My moral instinct told me that I could never have perpetrated an attachment to another man's wife.

'I suppose you could let me have this photograph,' I said, 'on my paying you your usual price?'

'O dear me, no, sir. That would be quite irregular. We just keep one, sir, supposing that our parties don't object, to put in the shop-window. Sometimes they come and ask us to take it out again. A good many people like to have their photographs sold, but others do not care for it a bit; and a respectable photographer would hardly sell it without permission.'

'I would willingly give you a couple of sovereigns for this one.'

'That is a very handsome price, sir, and I should not mind selling. At the same time the photograph is such an extremely good one, that it is really worth that, or more than that, as an advertisement to our business. But I don't mind asking the General, or asking the General to ask the lady if she will permit.'

I did not think that there was much chance of an uncompromising General's assent. And I was anxious to secure my prize at once.

'It was hardly worth while troubling the General,' I said. 'Just once in a way you might not mind departing from your rule. It is a very proper rule, no doubt; but the beauty of a rule is that it always has its exception.'

The shopman laughed and let me have the photograph; and with this treasure-trove I made my joyous exit.

That photograph was a treasure-trove to me. I really became very fond of this photograph, talked

to it a great deal, and made myself generally ridiculous over it. I knew a fellow who always travelled with his *fiancée's* photograph. 'Good-morning, my dear Ellen,' he used to say to it the first thing in the morning, and 'Good-night, sweet Ellen,' the last thing at night. He talked to the photograph so much, that he really came to believe that the only reason why the photograph did not speak to him again was because, like the celebrated parrot, it was too much occupied with thinking. I have also heard the story of a man who was ordered abroad with his regiment, and who took his wife's photograph with him. He declared on his return that he had never failed to salute the photograph; but his wife rather confounded him by exhibiting the article, which she had stealthily withdrawn from the case before his departure.

Now this photograph, I may truly aver, became my inseparable companion, and, as will be seen, accompanied me through a great variety of scenery and incident in search of its divine original. I had a horrible dread, in spite of my inner consciousness, that the original might prove—Mrs. General Bulstrode! in which case all my summer day-dreams would pass away.

My noble friend charged himself with the duty of investigating the matter. He investigated it with all the zeal of an amateur detective, and in a day or two he was able to report substantial results. I need not be under any apprehension respecting the Mrs. General Bulstrode theory. There was such a lady, oldish and very yellow, who moved about with the General on his travels from place to place; but when actually resident at any particular place, partook of as little locomotion as possible. The

young lady was named Cecilia Manning, the daughter of Mrs. General Bulstrode by a former marriage. The General and his wife had lately returned from India, and met the young lady, who had been at school and afterwards lived with an aunt. They had resolved to travel about for some time, and were going to travel in the west of England and afterwards go abroad. I really gave Erskine a great deal of credit for all the pains he had taken, and to hit upon some plan of utilising them. He had managed to find out that they were going to Torquay, and on to the Land's End.

So the time comes that we start for Torquay, a memorable journey. We are at Exeter. We enter the vast station of St. David's. There is all the confusion of a great junction. There is the rush and hurry and tramp of many passengers. Past the broad pleasant Exe; past the pleasant prospect overlooked by the cathedral towers; a glance seaward across the water to Exmouth; a glance landwards towards the towers of Powderham Castle in the embosoming woods. Then we come to what is surely the prettiest bit of railway travelling in the whole country, where the line runs directly opposite the English Channel, and the wind drives the seaspray into our faces, and the seabirds are about the carriage-windows, and we drive through tunnel after tunnel of the red sandstone. We change carriages at Newton Junction, and then, through a country of streams and gardens and rich fields and magnificent timber, we come to Torre and to Torquay.

Torquay was a very sweet region. The blue of the sea, the red of the sandstone, the green of the foliage commingled very nobly, and made up a perfect picture. I had never

been there before, and I had hardly any idea that England owned anything so beautiful. It was more like one of the Italian lakes, as beautiful in its way as Como or Lugano. I went to one of the big hotels; but then the place was full of big hotels. I thought I had better go to the very biggest of them, on the chance of finding the names I wanted on the visitors' list, or perhaps meeting these visitors themselves at the *table d'hôte*. However, I was altogether disappointed. Torquay is all up-hill or down-hill. It boasts a vehicle peculiar to itself, called a midge. A bath-chair was out of the question in this kind of country. I had a relay of midges, and scoured all the country. The time of the year was rather unpropitious to my design. In the winter people settle down in domiciles and stay a long time. But in the summer tourists come on flying visits. They only come for short periods, and get over a great extent of country. I had to study the county maps as carefully as if I had been a Prussian Uhlan, and as if the Prussians were meditating a descent on Torbay after the old fashion of William of Orange. There was so much that a tourist could do if he made his headquarters at Torquay and investigated the country. He might go backwards along the lovely combes, by which lay the road to the estuary waters of the Teign; or he might take a railway that led on to the wild region of Dartmoor and the girdle of lovely counties that surround it. Or he might take the Torbay railway to the old-fashioned town of Dartmouth, and either go up the river Dart with its Rhinelike scenery, or go through the most sequestered part of England, the Southern Hams. It will be seen that I took in the whole character of the ground, and

was carefully looking up the strategic places. But then the great point was to ascertain where the rampageous old General and his party might be located. It would be easy enough for Lord George to investigate the hotels. It was only consuming an indefinite number of brandies-and-sodas, a task to which my noble friend felt himself perfectly equal, especially when it was not done at his own expense. But all around Torquay there were innumerable villas nestled in groves and gardens, each house islanded, so to speak, in its separate domain, where Cecilia might be embowered like the Sleeping Princess in the woods, very Hesperian fruit!

I lingered a good bit of time at Torquay. Erskine and I made some charming excursions in company, and then to economise time we took separate routes. My health was progressing famously, but I was still obliged to elect the easier places. There was no difficulty in the Dart. We had a spell of lovely weather, and the little steamer was so popular and so crowded, that I thought it quite worth my while to spend two or three days going from Dartmouth to Totnes, and from Totnes to Dartmouth. I did not see the Bulstrode party, and even if I had it would have been of little use. I felt that I should not be of much use to myself without the friendly aid of my noble or ignoble friend. In the first place, I had an incurable shyness. And I was still so infirm, that even if I met them I should, by myself, be quite helpless in finding out anything about their movements. Now Erskine, if necessary, would rush among the horses' hoofs at any time. He realised the Horatian line:

'Græculus esuriens, si in cœlum jusseris,
ibit.'

Actually on the Newton plat-

form, one day, we had a great opportunity and lost it. We had been running up to Dartmoor, seen the great prison where the 'unfortunate nobleman was languishing,' and had gladdened our eyes with the sight of some of the seventy dark streams that rise on the moor. We had determined to go on to the south-west, even to the seas above the lost kingdom of Lyonesse. The Flying Dutchman came rushing up.

'Take your seats, gentlemen!' cried the station-master, as we were delaying in looking up our traps.

At this moment a lovely face, the face of the lady of the photograph, was shown at the window of a first-class carriage.

Erskine, with the acumen of a generalissimo, observed that there were several vacant places in the broad-gauge carriage.

'What class, gentlemen?' said the guard.

Alas, we had only second-class tickets!

'This way, gentlemen, this way;' and we were hurried onwards to another part of the train.

I suggested, even in the hurry of the moment, that we would go first class.

'No time to change your tickets now, gentlemen. You must get in; we are twenty minutes behind time already.'

And we were literally thrust into the carriage, and in another minute the train was madly rushing forward in a frantic attempt to recover that lost twenty minutes.

I looked around me and took stock of the other occupants of the carriage. There was a nice-mannered pleasant girl in one corner of the carriage, who might have been a lady's-maid or nursery governess, and one or two people who evidently belonged to the grade of domestic servants. This

is truly said to be one of the drawbacks of second-class travelling, that you so often meet with the domestics of the first-class travellers. You have frequently much pleasanter and more refined company in the third class than you have in the second. There was a young footman, I remember, who made himself obnoxious by singing 'Champagne Charley is my name' in a ridiculous and self-asserting manner. He endeavoured, after his musical efforts, to make himself conversational to the young lady in the corner, who evidently did not belong to his party, and by no means encouraged his advances. I observed that she was occupied with reading the *Guardian*, and was much amused by observing the evident interest with which she entered into the clerical correspondence. As for myself, I was sitting in one of my dreamy 'mooning' fits, wondering how I might be able to make use of this golden opportunity, resolving to watch carefully each station where we might stop, and to stop, go on, and stop again, as the Bulstrode party might stop, go on, or stop again.

I was much amused, however, by observing how Erskine, who had secured the opposite corner, was entering into conversation with his *vis-à-vis*. It was the *Guardian* that invited on his part some decorous ecclesiastical remarks. This led to an expression from the young lady of a disapprobation of some extreme proceedings of 'them Ritualists.'

'Our General,' she said, 'doesn't hold with them; nor more do I.'

Here Erskine gave me a severe nudge with his elbow, by way of drawing my attention to the fact that he was about to develop the various tactics of social cross-examination.

And he did it very cleverly. He delicately elicited from her

that the General to whom she alluded was no other than General Bulstrode; but she exhibited some little indignation when Erskine bluntly put the question whether she was in the General's service.

'No, indeed!' she answered. She was in the service of no gentleman, except that he paid her her wages—at least, he paid it to her out of the money of her young mistress. She was own lady's-maid to Miss Manning, the General's stepdaughter. And having thus exhibited a considerable amount of volubility, Erskine gave her line enough, and his tackle and her tackle kept on harmoniously together. She was a very nice sort of girl, with few faults, except those on the surface, beyond a little amiable indiscretion as regarded her gifts of speech.

'And I suppose your General is a very great man?'

'I should think so!' said the girl. 'You should only hear of the tigers he has killed, and you should only see the beautiful shawls and the gold filigree he has brought; and his black man tells me that he has often ordered out a score of black soldiers and given them three dozen apiece before breakfast.'

'And how did your young lady like these goings on? I suppose she liked the shawls and the gold better than the sight of the triangles for flogging?'

'Bless her heart, the darling! she never clapped eyes on the old General till this day six weeks ago. She was sent home from India when her father was alive; and when her father died the missis, who had stopped in India, got married again pretty soon to the General. The young missis was at school, and as soon as she left school a twelvemonth ago I was engaged as her maid by her aunt. No, thank you. The Gen-

eral is very good in his way, but I do not call him my master.'

'And I suppose you have got a very nice young mistress?' I said; and as I said it the words of an old song came into my head:

'The fairest garden in her looks,
And in her mind the sweetest books.'

The girl almost gave me back my thought in literal prose.

'O, she is so nice! Give her a book or a picture, or a flower or a bit of music, and she is quite satisfied.'

'And where are you going to now?' asked the irrepressible Erskine.

She replied by taking her ticket out of her mouth and showing it to us. The ticket was to Plymouth; but even in these days of school-board education she did not have much of an idea where Plymouth might happen to be.

'But we don't stop there,' she exclaimed. 'We are going on to the very world's end in these parts. And when we have finished with England we shall go on to the very world's end in other parts. I said when I answered the advertisement that I had no objection to travelling. Neither I haven't.'

The train shrieked as we passed over the spider-like viaduct of Ivybridge. We come into Plymouth. Erskine knows the station well, and I do not. The maid was presently waiting very demurely on the platform, and Erskine contrived to learn that the party were going on by the West Cornwall line. There is great bustle and confusion from the change of carriages. The moment was not propitious for any kind of action. Erskine hurried me up to see the Hoe, for he said that he was sure that I would never forgive him if I came to Plymouth, and did not see that fair sight which the Admiral of the Spanish Armada so longed to possess. Being a man with ac-

quaintances everywhere, he took me into the Yacht Club, where we restaurated. Then back to the station in time for the train.

Over the Royal Albert Bridge, looking down upon the vessels far beneath us so tiny, with near and distant views of the border-lands of Cornwall and Devon; on, on we pass over a succession of bridges and viaducts that span the valleys and alight upon the hill-tops; pass small towns and smaller villages—all Cornish towns run small—pass primitive country people standing about the gates of stations, for on this line all the trains are cheap and stop everywhere. All move very slowly, for it is a somewhat perilous line, raised on wooden trestles, and no train must exceed a certain speed, and all the line has to be repeatedly surveyed every day.

'Now, old man,' exclaimed Erskine, 'I will just explain to you the geography. The doubtful point which we have to decide is whether our dear friends intend to go to Falmouth or to Penzance. Certainly they ought not to miss such a lovely harbour as Falmouth, and this is the most direct way to Helston and the Lizard country. But on the other hand, at Penzance you command the Lizard and Land's End, and can go to the Scilly Islands or to the north coast. Make yourself quite easy, I will keep a sharp look-out when we get to Truro. Perhaps our little *soubrette* may turn up again.'

Penzance, he reported to me, was our destination. For some time in the darkness of the evening our way was fitfully illuminated by the light of furnace-fires. The streams ran white with the china-works. Then over a broad expanse of tranquil water we saw at last the 'vision of Bayona and the guarded mount,' St. Michael's Mount of the St. Aubyn's, rising

aloft and beyond the lights of Penzance. Then we get to the station—the only one I knew by name, and that because I had seen it mentioned in one of Mr. Black's novels.

But it is Fortune that helps the brave, and it is the brave who deserve the fair. I made a point of wandering about the glorious headlands and beaches of West Cornwall. I congratulated myself that while I was carrying out my friend's wishes and my doctor's orders, I was also advancing my own particular schemes. Lord George assured me that I was making a great mistake in not coming faster to the winning-post, and that if I would only strike boldly I should be able to get an introduction, and to bring the introduction to a prosperous issue. But then Lord George had 'a gift of impudence' with which I could not compete, and against which I was nervously on my guard. It made me tingle with very shame, the thought of being accused of forwardness and presumption. I am afraid that I am not the sort of man to get on in the world, which made me all the more grateful for the fact that I had had 'a father before me,' who, in a sort of way, had made me very tolerably independent of the world. I must say that it was rather mortifying, when we had been to the very westernmost point of English soil, and had climbed the Logan rock, and had faced the Atlantic rollers, and had refreshed at the First and Last Inn, paying pretty highly for that unique distinction, that just as we had settled our score and called for our bags an open barouche drove up, and I caught a passing gleam of the divine original of the photograph. Erskine promptly recommended that either we should return to the rocks to make a geological investiga-

tion, or that it would be a good opportunity of making another feed, which he could always do at a moment's notice and on the slightest pretext. I waived the unconscionable proposal, and Fate speedily gave me a compensation to which I certainly felt entitled.

We had gone down from Penzance to the Lizard country. We had seen at Helston the great fresh-water lake, only separated by a bar of sand from the ocean, and had then gone southward to see the famous lighthouse, and to explore caves and coves. There is one, the loveliest of all coves, near the Lizard. I will not give its name, for this is a distinction for which there is some competition among the Lizard folk and the army of tourists and artists. One fine summer, having come up from the little inn at the Lizard on our homeward journey to Penzance, we came down to the beach. Looking landward down the cliff, along the gradual path there came a long procession of boatmen, carrying their piles of net. The scene was as complete and picturesque as a scene at the Italian Opera. The beach, closed in by cliffs, was most lovely. There were little rock-pools amid the smooth sands, each a brilliant aquarium; and scattered about were many rare and exquisite shells. A natural arch, in the path leading to the sea, set the scene as in a picture-frame. When we got down to the flooring of this famous beach we found that there was a party already there. They were taking the cove on their way to the Lizard, as we were taking it on the return journey.

Etiquette is all very well in its way, and I am a great stickler for it. Nevertheless, etiquette was made for man, and not man for etiquette. If you meet people in a lonely cove fronting the Atlantic

Ocean, you can hardly ignore their existence. I have no doubt that the General considered us an intrusion; and if he had followed the untutored dictates of his own mind, he would like to order us up for three dozen. But his wife, a pleasant good-natured woman, made some kindly remarks, and some general conversation followed, in which we compared notes on various points of the Cornish coast which we had visited. Then there was a famous cavern to be explored, involving a difficult and prolonged pull over rocks and shingle; and as the guide was carrying a big bundle of firewood for the purpose of illuminating the cavern, the General, who had not calculated on the roughness of the ground, was glad of an additional helping hand with his women-folk. As he was helping his wife, I helped the young lady. Erskine had slunk far into the rear, probably earning for himself the imputation of being an ill-conditioned and uncivil animal, to which in my interests he would heroically submit. It was a very fine cavern in its way, its wild and secret position giving it an additional mystery and charm. It had been a retreat for smugglers, and it was not impossible that parcels of silks and brandies might yet be found in its recesses. When we emerged from it at last, there was a wonderful story to be told of a Spanish galleon that had gone down in deep water at the end of the reef. One enterprising clergyman had spent an immense sum of money within recent years in employing divers to recover any of the lost bars of metal: such a discovery in the American seas had laid the foundations of the fortunes of the house of Lansdowne; but there was no luck in this venture on the Cornish coast. I remember how extraordinary rollers came in upon

the cove, and the guide said that there must be some great storm a thousand miles away at sea, of which no intimation could be gathered from the quiet smiling skies, which alone could account for the magnitude of the waves. I can assure my reader, who has never tried it, that it is a great thing to sit on the boulders of a Cornish cove, and to look out on those wide seas—'the baths of all the western stars.' The old song says, 'One, two, three, full on the shingle they break;' but each ninth wave is longest and tallest in the series, and I believe that there is some truth in the idea that each tenth wave is an exact repetition of the tenth wave previous. I am told that artists obtain the accuracy of sea-effects, or may obtain, by the study of tenth waves. You might discover, or think you discovered, the archipelago of the Scilly Isles that morning you saw the headlands of the western promontory. And if you really wish to commence the summer romance of your life under appropriate circumstances and amid glorious surroundings, what could be fairer or better than to do so on this bright summer morning in this remote corner of Cornwall? Then the very weirdness and wonder of the spot! For me at least her voice would be always associated with music of the summer sea, her aspect with the morning glory shed upon the sparkling bay.

We talked about the Arthurean stories connected with Cornwall, and of the mystic palaces and churches supposed to sleep far beneath the sea, between the mainland and the Scilly Isles. I told her that Great Britain had five thousand islets scattered around her shores. Then we spoke of northern Cornwall, of the fabled splendours of Camelot and the real

greatness of Tintagel. Then we talked of the ballads of Mr. Hawker and the idylls of Alfred Tennyson. I had a diplomatic object in all this. Nothing is more capricious and uncertain than the movements of sightseers, and I wanted to find out whether they were going to see the lions of the north coast and were returning home. Miss Manning was not very certain of their movements; they had a very few days more. And then they were going up to London, with a view of starting for the Continent.

Erskine and I had a council of war that afternoon, and by a wonderful combination of circumstances it was discovered that we also had a certain call of business to London. We had obtained no definite information, but thought we could hardly go wrong in getting to town. We resolved on going to the Great Western Hotel, where we should be on the spot, and be able to take what is sometimes called 'a minute and comprehensive survey' of all the arrival trains.

On the very morning after our arrival Erskine burst into my bedroom.

'Make haste, make haste!' he cried. 'We are off to Paris this very night!'

'Why on earth are we going to Paris?'

'Because I have found out that our friends are off to Paris. And they are going a good way beyond Paris as well.'

'Who told you that?'

'Little Annette.'

'And who's little Annette?'

'Why, her maid—Miss Manning's maid.'

'You don't mean to say that you have met the maid?'

'I do indeed. And where do you think that Miss Manning slept last night?'

'How can I tell, Erskine? I wouldn't be an ass, if I were you.'

'Why, she slept next door to you.'

'Goodness gracious!'

'It seems that on their arrival they drove away from the Paddington Station to the Charing Cross Hotel. And as they found it quite full, they came back to the Great Western Hotel; and they had the big rooms next to our own.'

'There was no sign of them in the coffee-room.'

'Of course not. They were breakfasting in their own rooms. And on the staircase I met little Annette, the same girl whom we met in the Flying Dutchman. And she says that they are going over to Paris to-night, and then either to Switzerland or the Pyrenees. Most likely to the Pyrenees.'

'Couldn't you get any more out of her?'

'Not a word. The girl was in the greatest hurry in the world. It is only a man with consummate tact and knowledge of the world that could have got so much out of her.'

He always was a conceited beast, that Lord George.

'We had better take the Charing Cross train, and cross over to Boulogne.'

'We have lost that train. Don't you think it just as possible that they may now have driven to Victoria and have gone to Dover, intending to cross to Calais?'

'Anyhow, pay the bill, and let us go.'

'But shall we have enough money?'

'I suppose we hardly shall, if we are going to the Continent, we don't know where, and we don't know for how long. I shall have to stay in Lombard-street a bit, to get bank-notes and sove-

reigns. Nothing like English bank-notes and sovereigns wherever you go. So we will take the Underground to Bishopsgate, and get on that way.'

In due time we arrived at Dover, intending to go by the Calais-Douvres next morning. But it is one thing to intend to go by the Calais-Douvres, and quite another actually to achieve the journey. The Calais-Douvres has a knack of getting indisposed every now and then, or of finding too little water in harbour; there is something or other that does not suit. At the Lord Warden we saw no sign of the people we wanted. We carefully scrutinised all the different people in the spacious coffee-room, who in their turn were eagerly scrutinising the waves and the skies, to judge of the chances of a fair passage. Of course it proved nothing that our friends were not there. They might be in private rooms; they might, after all, not have left London; they might have gone to Folkestone. No sign being visible, we thought we might wait a day. There were various people who were doing the same, because they thought they would diminish the chances of sea-sickness by going in the big twin-ship. We lounged about the town, and took a trap to see Dover Castle and Walmer Castle. Grand old places they were in their way, the very air redolent of English history. But the day after, we found ourselves on board the floating town of the Calais-Douvres. Hundreds of people, and among them no sign of the people whom we wanted. I am bound to say that the chances of sickness were very greatly diminished, a greater degree of stability being assured than I had thought possible, and altogether the voyage was very pleasant and lively. The twin vessels seemed

to typify the honoured estate of matrimony; although it seemed as if the married vessels might easily be driven asunder by a storm, which happens often enough among the bridegrooms and brides of earth.

At Calais our most obvious proceeding was to go on to Boulogne. Treasure-trove might perhaps be found in the English quarter of the Tintelleries. We went off at once to the Etablissement. One great advantage of the Etablissement is that you meet every one there who is staying at Boulogne. We roamed through all the rooms and strolled out on the beach, and Lord George made a conscientious point of dropping in at various hotels to collect information and to try his favourite combination of the *petit verre* and the *eau de seetz*. These were duly entered to me as business expenses. I really believe that a good deal is to be done in Boulogne in an ordinary way; but being disappointed in my particular object, I voted Boulogne a failure and a bore, and we took the night mail to Paris.

'And what can we do in this world of Paris, Erskine? I asked.

It was the doubtful dawn, and I was in a pitiable state of uncertainty and indecision, assuredly the worst state in which a poor fellow can be found.

'Keep your pecker up, old man. I shall have several good cards to play, but the first and simplest is the best. We will go to Galigani's, and look at the list of visitors.'

I had not been at Paris for years. I was strangely excited, not alone by the novelty of being there once more, but also I had a vague kind of feeling that perhaps this novel quest might be fruitful at last. I felt that something was in the air, that something was going to happen.

Shall I ever forget that morning in Paris? I got out of the *remise voiture* and insisted that I would stroll about till the shops should be open. Erskine was to get rooms for us at the Hôtel Continental or the Hôtel du Louvre.

'Well, that's a foolish fad of yours, Fiennes,' said my friend. 'But keep to the Rue de Rivoli, and if you turn off to the river, come back here again, that I may pick you up somewhere in the colonnade.'

The light began to break in the east. I wandered to the Place de la Bastille, thinking of the pictured page of Carlyle. I watched the *ouvrier* go forth to his work, the signalman of that vast proletariat class that has always dominated the destiny of the gay metropolis. I went into a café, and fraternised with the blouses drinking hot coffee dashed with cognac from the glass tumblers. I leaned over the bridges, paced beneath the towers of Notre Dame, and confronted the graceful outline of the Sainte Chapelle, the sombre frontage of the Palais de Justice. A fresh breeze from the west brightened the quivering river. The pure morning sky was unstained by smoke or vapour. As soon as the baths were opened I had a plunge in the stream, and then went and sat down in the little garden by the Tour de Jacques, immortalised by the scientific experiments of Pascal. The poorer shops were all opened now; the glittering bazaar of the Palais Royal and the arched streets kept more fashionable hours. Turning in the opposite direction, I dropped in on the crowded picturesque scenes of the markets, where the business heart of Paris was already in full throbb. I noticed many poor people with their baskets entering the church of St. Eustache. The sun was now somewhat violent in its heat,

and the shadow and coolness were most refreshing to me. Protestant though I was, I willingly mingled my orisons with those of the kneeling poor around me, and felt happier and more cheerful that this had been done. Then back again to the Rue de Rivoli as far as the Place de la Concorde. As I paced up and down the long historic street what mingled images strode through my excited brain! I heard the tocsin peal forth from the little church beyond the Louvre, and the firing of the first guns on the night of St. Bartholomew. Once more a mighty multitude was gathered by the Obelisk of Luxor, to witness the doom of the most unhappy and innocent of kings and queens. Once more the front ranks of the Prussian army proceeding down the Champs Elysées draw close to the historic ground. Now I see from the side gate of the Tuileries gardens Louis Philippe and his family quietly emerge and start on that farewell journey. And now by the terrace where I had once seen the Prince Imperial and his mother are the awful blackened ruins; and surely that is a vulture or eagle, bird of desolation, which has just soared from a broken cornice of the desolated palace. Amid all these revolving memories there was an undertone of mystery and gladness that told me that Cecilia and I were breathing the air of the same famous city, and that the changes and chances of life might bring me the vision and audience that I sought.

Just at the very door of Galignani's I met Erskine, whose face exhibited considerable glee.

'Just come in here,' he called out; 'I have something to show you.'

The favourite old reading-room is a thing of the past; the kind-hearted old man Galignani, who

has done so much good for the English poor in Paris, is no more; but day by day there is the visitors' list, which is subsequently transferred to the *Messenger*.

And there I read:

'Major-General Bulstrode, Hôtel Continental.

Mrs. General Bulstrode, do.

Miss Manning, do.'

'I hope to goodness, Erskine, you have taken our traps to the Continental.'

'I did, old man; but they were quite full, and said that an English party had arrived late last night and had taken the only rooms. And I should not wonder now if the Bulstrodes and their niece were the very people.'

'And what in the world are we to do?'

'I have done by accident the very next best thing, for I have gone next door. The very next door is an hotel. I ought to remember it, for the driver made me pay an extra fare for going an extra dozen yards. He said that I had commenced an extra course. We shall have them fairly under observation, and nothing need prevent us going to the *table d'hôte*.'

You may go to a *table d'hôte* at a foreign hotel—there is never any difficulty about that; but there is a difficulty, generally an impossibility, in getting near people who do not belong to your party. It may perhaps be managed, generally through the complicity of waiters; but in the present instance it was not done. Lord George on this occasion had failed either in luck or in tact. At the further end of a long table I could only just make out the lost strangers of the West of England. I opened the precious little case without which I never travelled, so that if Cecilia was far off from me in one way she was close to me in another. I was

well tired out by the night's journey and the morning's wandering in the dawn about the streets of Paris.

I waited by the door of the *salle-à-manger* until such time as the Bulstrode party should go out. Never was courtier at a *levée* or a dependent in a great man's antechamber more anxious for a smile and a greeting than I was.

The General came first. He greeted me very affably.

"Well, here we are again," as the clowns say. We seem destined to meet one another in unexpected places.'

'The surface of human life,' I answered sententiously, 'is extremely small. The world is by no means so big as we think it is. You will find that the same people are always cropping up like recurring decimals.'

By this time the ladies had come up. Cecilia shook hands frankly, and Mrs. Bulstrode gave a pleasant smile.

'Sorry I can't stay to talk with you now,' said the General. 'I am going to take my womenkind to the Grand Opéra to-night, and I insist on their staying quietly in their own rooms until we go out. But I am sure to meet you again. I have noticed that if you meet people once or twice on a tour, the chances are that they will come across one another again.'

'O yes,' I answered, with a laugh. 'It is only a matter of time; we are sure to meet again. *Au revoir.*'

He little thought how literally I intended the words to come true.

Then the ladies made a graceful inclination, and I was left meditating that many a true word was spoken in jest, and quite resolved that the recurring decimal should recur at the first opportunity.

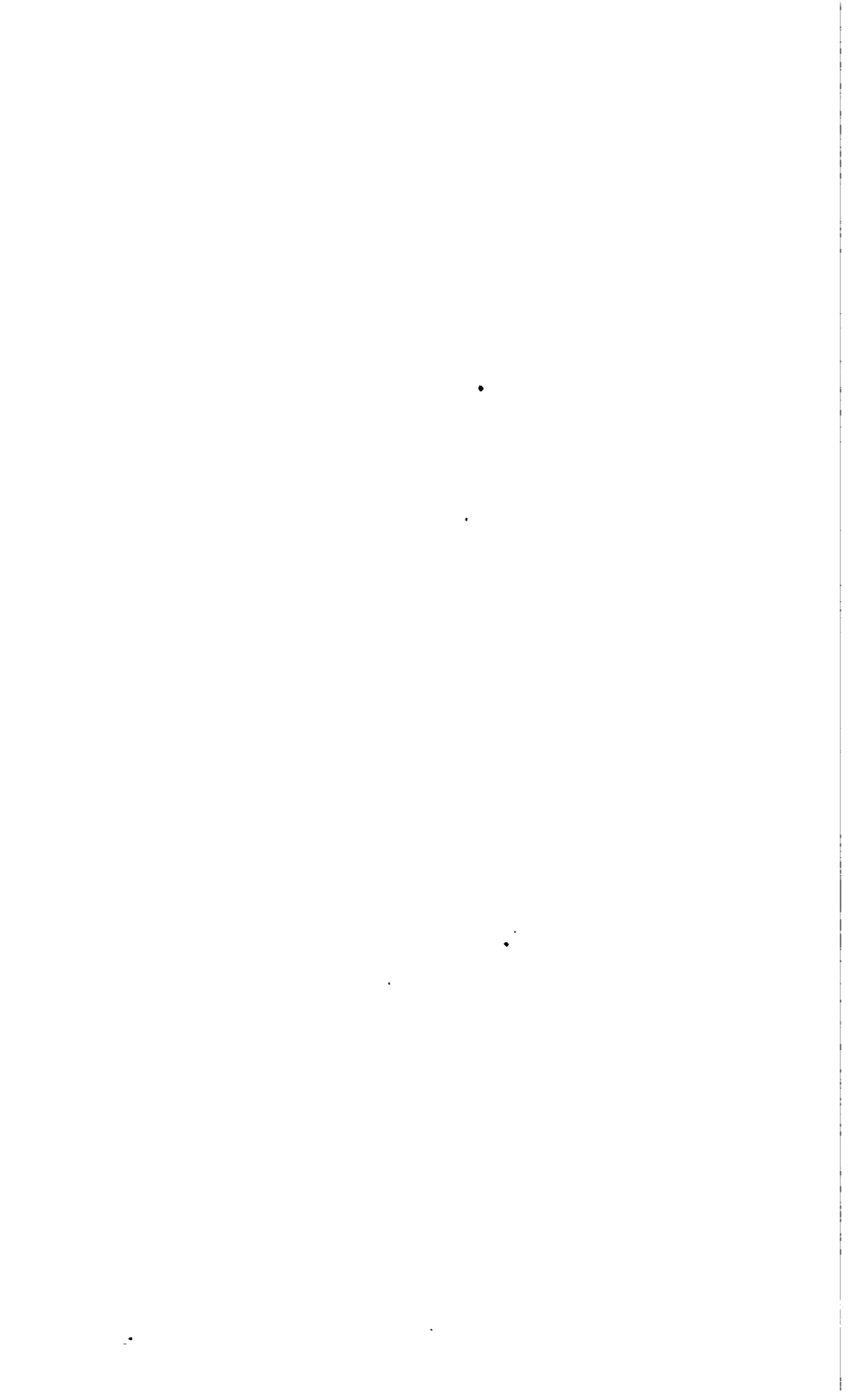
In the mean time Erskine had made rapid progress with his own immediate neighbours, so much so that he handed them his card, which was received with great *empressement*. The lady who sat next him wore a wonderful lot of diamonds, so much so that she seemed a kind of chandelier revolving on her own axis. It was great fun to hear her call Erskine 'my lord,' and offer him a seat in her box at the Opera-house. Erskine introduced us, and as the lady had no one with her but another lady who was her companion, there was room for me also in a shady retreat behind the front row. Two or three other people who had heard Erskine saluted as 'your lordship' indicated signs of that reverence and admiration which so many Britishers rejoice in conceding to the peerage. I rather felt that I was getting hold of a good thing by false pretences; but I thought that I might have a good chance of reconnoitring our friend at the Opera-house.

I was not disappointed. There was no need of a lorgnette, for our box was very near that occupied by our friends. As we strolled in the magnificent *foyer* we had an opportunity of discussing the glories of the house and the gorgeous Egyptian scenery of the opera.

Lord George made great way with his diamonded widow, whose jewelry certainly suggested the idea of great solvency. I suggested to him that he had better have things put on the square, and give no sanction to the absurd idea that he belonged to the peerage. This he promised to do, but resolved to take his own time about it. What was more to the purpose, we were able to ascertain something of the movements of the Bulstrodes, and before very



A CHASE BY SEA AND LAND.



long we had our order of march made out for us.

The information which we received was tolerably exact. We got on to Bordeaux; rejoiced in the unrivalled water frontage of this ancient city; descended into mighty cavernous depths amid myriad casks of wine; went on to Bayonne, saw the old and new cathedrals, revived our *souvenirs* of Wellington and his Peninsular army; went on to Biarritz, took some of the breezy drives along the cliffs and through the uplands, and got as far as the Spanish frontier; bathed in the sea beneath the Empress Eugénie's deserted villa. Then Erskine informed me one morning, 'from information which he had received,' to use the policeman's phrase, that we must take the train from Bayonne to Pau, where we would have to settle whether we would take the rail further on or go at once up into the mountains.

There is no English population at Pau in the summer. But few travellers can pass it by without seeing the marvellous view from the terrace and visiting the apartments of the grand historic château. Some make it a halting-place before they go up into the mountains, to Eaux Bonnes and Eaux Chaudes, and to many a lateral valley of the mountain-chain. At Pau we caught sight of the party sitting in front of one of the big fortress-like hotels, listening to music, sipping iced lemonade, and enjoying what Lord Macaulay incorrectly calls 'the long waving line of the blue Pyrenees.' The Pyrenees form not a waving line, but a serrated line. We had a pleasant talk for a few minutes. Though orthodox Protestants, they were going on a pilgrimage to the shrine of our Lady of Lourdes. There were a great lot of pilgrims going to Lourdes. Pilgrims have

made considerable advances in their modes of pilgrimage. Once they walked with hard peas in their boots; then an ingenious pilgrim hit upon the plan of boiling the peas. Now they travel in first-class railway-carriages, with plenty of wraps and abundant refreshments at the railway-stations.

Erskine, as usual, was carefully on his guard. This was much to his credit, as Mrs. Thompson of the Hôtel Continental was on her way to London, and, by a perversity of fortune, we saw more of her than of Cecilia Manning and her friends.

'Bravo, my boy!' he said; 'they are going to Pierrefitte, and that's a terminus; and you will certainly be able to run them to earth, especially if they go to Caunterets.'

And I thought of Tennyson's lines written at Caunterets:

'All along the valley three-and-thirty years ago.'

But instead of going up the valley to Caunterets, they took the side of the other stream and went to Luz.

A fresh anxiety arose at Luz. Would they turn to the right and go to St. Sauveur, or would they turn to the left to Barèges, and thence to Bigorre, where they would once more find the railway, and might now be irrecoverably lost to our ken? Or would they go straight on, straight to Gavarnie, where, strategically speaking, we should have them in a *cul de sac*? There arose the white circling walls of cliffs and glaciers, beyond which, unless they were altogether abnormal climbers, there was hardly any chance they would penetrate; where there was the solitary hostel, and the wide loneliness of the broken valley of the Cascade.

They went to St. Sauveur, and we followed. We saw that exquisite bridge with which the Third Napoleon spanned the stream, and the church which he built for the

town. The Republic has spared the inscription on the bridge, and I should think that there would be very few Republicans at St. Sauveur. But we met the Bulstrode party returning to Luz, and I could not help blushing deeply as I took off my hat in return to their courteous recognition.

We watched them from our hotel-window at Luz. They had taken a carriage to go up the valley of the Gave of Gavarnie; and the curious point was whether they were only going for the day as excursionists, or had written to secure rooms. Erskine reported that they carried luggage, which indicated that they were going to stay for a day or two, which would be short time enough. We joyfully saw the carriage start, and then prepared ourselves for a brisk four hours' walk to Gavarnie. We were safe to run them down. We must find them as soon as the carriage-road came to an end amid the mountains.

Of all the walks in the Pyrenees commend me to the one from Luz to Gavarnie. It is a most magnificent defile to the most glorious bit of scenery in the Pyrenees. Up, up we went through the rocky path cut in the mountain's side, the dark-green river raving alone in its abyssmal fissure, now through deep woods, now crossing the trembling wooden bridge, now passing by gigantic blocks and boulders, and now getting a glance of that famous gap in the mountain-wall known as the legendary Brèche de Roland. When we had got to Gèdre, the one little inn on the line of road, we found that our friends had just had lunch and had gone on. We persevered with our walk and reached Gavarnie; and still hesitating and uncertain, we went to the river meadows, to the banks of the stream, and looked on the glaciers, on the eternal

snows, and that waterfall which is the highest in Europe. Then I came near the little inn, which then to me appeared to be nothing else than the jewel-case which held the jewel of the world. And there on a bench before the door, smoking the fragrant weed, was the burly form of General Bulstrode.

'Well, upon my soul,' said the General, 'this is most extraordinary! You really have turned up again, Mr.—Mr.—Mr.—'

'Fiennes,' I suggested, giving him my name.

'I was about to say, Mr. Fiennes, that the amount of coincidences in this poor limited planet is most extraordinary. If I did not know perfectly well to the contrary, I should say that either you were running after me, or that I was running after you.'

I assured the General, and that most conscientiously, that I certainly was not running after him.

'Fiennes, Fiennes!' he exclaimed. 'Was your father any relation to old Jack Fiennes, who was the Collector at Fyzabad?'

'The only relationship was this: my late father was the Collector at Fyzabad.'

'Of course, of course! From the very first I knew there was something in your face which I recognised and liked. Why, my boy, for four or five years your father and I were as thick as brothers; and here the General shook hands with me vigorously and repeatedly.'

Emboldened by this kindness, I confessed to the General that we were not the mere combination of atoms which he had supposed; but that I had fallen in love with his stepdaughter, and had wandered over a whole section of Europe in pursuit of her.

'All the way from the Lizard to Luz?'

'Even so, sir.'

'What a fuss about a trifle!'

said the General. 'Why, my lad, you are just the man to suit her. If you have not got much money, she has got a good bit of her own. But I expect my old friend, the Collector of Fyzabad, was worth a plum.'

I acknowledged that I had no reason to complain.

'Well, my boy, try your chance with my best wishes. She is a very nice girl; but I shall be very happy to give the responsibility into another's keeping. Besides, a woman's not half a woman until she has her husband and babies.'

Under such favourable auspices I was allowed to renew my acquaintance with Cecilia Manning. The old General, whom I had chiefly dreaded, proved the kindest and most serviceable of allies. The plan of their remaining campaign was fully disclosed by him to me. They were going on to Luchon, and I was to be permitted to accompany them.

In the leafy arcades of Luchon I told my tale and pleaded my cause. Cecilia laughed at my folly, as she called it, about the photograph; she was not ill-pleased with the story of my persistent

pursuit, and she gave me the original, for which alone I would exchange the portrait.

As for my noble and right honourable friend, he succeeded in fascinating the widow, whose diamonds had so successfully fascinated him in the first place. I believe she was terribly disappointed that 'Lord George,' in the conventional sense, was no 'lord' at all. But he had not intentionally deceived her. He was in birth and breeding a gentleman, and, above all, she was very fond of him. I threw all the weight of my attachéship—and with the widow it had great weight—on to the favourable side; and I ventured to think that if they continued abroad they might yet obtain some sort of title. I predict that they will yet burst upon an astonished world as a real live baron and baroness. For myself, I often tell my wife that we had our honeymoon travels before the marriage; but, however that may be, we neither of us regret that the sweet time of wooing was spent amid the solemnities of the ocean and the mountains.

UNDER BODDAM LIGHTHOUSE.

'NELLIE, I wonder why it is that you have not married yet? I am sure it cannot be for want of offers.'

Mrs. Custance, Nellie's old friend and schoolfellow, with whose party she was staying at Peterhead, was the speaker; and had you or I been in Buchan Haven cove on this sunny summer morning, lounging with them on the sand, we should have awaited the answer with some curiosity. For none could deny that Nellie Stewart was a beautiful woman, beautiful still with the beauty of girlhood, though she only wanted three years of thirty. The two friends had been bathing, and Nellie's thick fair hair still fell in wavy masses round the small delicate face, her complexion was almost too clear; but the mobility of the features and the quick glancing mirth of the eyes redeemed her face from any reproach that might attach to it as belonging to the impassive class of beauties. Her tall supple form was seen to advantage as she half sat, half lay against the pebbly ridge, gazing across the sea at a few brown dots almost lost in the haze, which were all now visible of the receding fishing-smacks slowly making their way to the haddock-beds. For a moment or two there was silence.

'Not so many as you would suppose, Mary,' she replied, with something of bitterness in the smile which was wasted upon the distant horizon.

'Then that must be your fault,' said Mrs. Custance, keenly watching the face only half turned from her. She was anxious to obtain a knowledge of Nellie's feelings upon

a point of some present interest to another in the party as well as to herself.

'It may be so; I daresay it is. You think I have suitors always at my feet. No, Mary; shall I tell you how it is? Shall I confess? My face is pretty enough to make men wish to be introduced to me; in London my life seems in the season one long series of introductions to fresh men,—to soldiers, sailors, tinkers, and tailors,' added she laughingly, casting a stone into the sea. 'Hostesses like to have me, for I always draw at first. I look very well at a distance, and make quite a pretty picture. But men never dance with me twice; not because my "paces are bad," as Mr. Colwyn would say, but because, Mary—they don't like me.'

'Really, Nellie, you always were a ridiculous girl,' answered Mrs. Custance, not well pleased by the tone of Nellie's allusion to her other guest.

'No, it is because I too often make *them* ridiculous that they don't like me. Men are naturally so vain, my dear, that they never forgive a woman who meets them on an equality. My new partner says something foolish to me—indeed he seldom says anything else—and it hardly needs a word from me—a mere look is often enough—to send him off, to tell the first friend he meets, "Doosid odd girl that; uncomfortable sort o' girl." And he doesn't ask for another dance, Mary. I am sure to hurt their pride, and away they go. Isn't it a dreadful thing to have a sense of the ridiculous, and a mastering inclination to

use the powers of repartee nature has given us? finished Nellie, with a comic sigh that had a plaintive reality in its depths.

'What an odd girl you are, Nellie!' said the elder woman pettishly.

'Just what my new partner says when we have had our first and only dance.'

'Well, at any rate all men are not of his opinion; some come back for a second and a third, and as many as you will give them, Nellie;' and Mrs. Custance glanced meaningly at a little boat with two rowers which had just rounded the arm of the tiny bay, and was slowly making its way towards them.

'Yes, but those who are so ready to accept the superiority of my contemptuous highness are hardly fit to become my lord and master,' said Nellie, in a lower tone. 'I do not think it better to rule in hell than serve in heaven. Mary,' with a sudden cry as she turned to the other, putting her hand in hers, 'you do not think me spiteful and ill-natured?'

Mrs. Custance saw that the eyes were brimming with tears, and hardly needed her womanly clearness to divine the warm depths that underlay the sparkling cynical surface which her clever friend opposed to the world. She knew that Nellie Stewart had gauged herself with the practical acuteness and insight, the expression of which had repelled so many would-be admirers. The girl had only put into her own words what was the general opinion of her in society.

The kindly little woman administered feminine comfort in the shape of a kiss, and, possessing the wonderful knowledge of when it is best to let well and ill alone, said nothing upon a subject which was very near her heart. She rose, and proposed that they should

stroll along the shore and meet the boat which was coming to fetch them back to Peterhead and luncheon.

If it is a far cry to Loch Awe, it certainly is a long one from London to the little fishing-town of Peterhead, in the north-east corner of Scotland. Before the herring-fishery begins, it is a pleasant place enough; the coast is in parts delightfully rugged, and where the sea is sufficiently smooth to allow of small boats approaching the base of the rocks, no more picturesque spots for water-picnics can be imagined. But it is seldom that small boats can venture outside the large harbour, the entrance to which, when there is the slightest wind, is marked by the breakers that reach from either side, and leave but a narrow passage of comparatively smooth water. To the eastward of the harbour lies the fishing-hamlet of Boddam, to the westward that of Buchan Haven; when there is any wind, a rough sea that would soon swamp any rowing craft save a lifeboat is always tumbling outside the harbour mouth. You can see the whales spouting out there; and nearer the beach, by the mouth of the little river, the salmon leap faster than you can count their splashes. But that is later in the year.

The Custances had been there a month, and would leave in a day or two to join some friends in Edinburgh. The party was not a large one, consisting only of themselves, their two children, Mrs. Custance's brother, Jack Colwyn, and her close friend, Nellie Stewart. That the party might be made smaller by the conversion of the two latter into one was the earnest desire of the pretty little woman, who was herself so happy in her husband and children and in the little nest at Brompton, to which

they would retire with less reluctance than the great majority of Londoners feel when their holiday is over. Her brother was only too anxious to fall in with her wishes; he had dogged the Stewart's footsteps through the earlier part of the season, and now he was playing attendance at Peterhead, when his natural impulses would have led him to seek some spot where the fishing was better and the society exclusively male. Jack Colwyn was a favourite with men, but until he met Nellie at his sister's house he had avoided with some care the places where the other sex congregated. Jack, in truth, was better with his fists than with his tongue, and was more quick and certain in casting a fly than in planting a repartee; but he was no fool, though a self-sufficient young lady thought him one; and though he never rose above the fifth form at Shrewsbury, he knew many things which were *Abacadabra*. to more showy talkers. And of course Jack had never shown to advantage in the presence of his mistress. He knew the reputation for wit and sarcasm, not to say ill-nature, which Nellie Stewart had won among men of more brilliant parts than himself; but seeing so much of her in the intimacy of his sister's home, though he would writhe under her barely disguised contempt and her unconcealed sense of superiority, he dimly discerned the womanly feelings which underlay these ebullitions, and continued his eager pursuit.

'Miss Stewart, it is a long time until dinner, and my sister has issued an edict against dressing for the same. Will you let me row you out for half an hour? It is so cool now.'

'I will come with pleasure, I am sure,' cried Nellie, who had a genuine and great love of the water. 'Ted,' she added to one of

the children, 'will you fetch me my cloak?'

Now Nellie felt almost sure that Jack intended to propose to her this evening. She made a shrewd guess that her friend had been sounding her on his behalf, and had reported not altogether unfavourably. She had no thought of evading it. Jack intended going on with them to Edinburgh, and in that most picturesque of towns, what with walks to Arthur's Seat and moonlight expeditions to view the Grass-market, and the lights in the old town, his opportunity must come sooner or later. Nellie had no intention of taking him. True, she had a sneaking kind of liking for Jack in a cousinly way, and a dim sense of his good qualities; but it was as she had said,—she was too conscious of her own superiority to be able to feel for the good-natured, shy, and ordinary young fellow as her romantic nature would have her feel for her future lord and master.

Once out into the middle of the harbour, away from the slimy stone steps and the tottering curing-houses, where the perfume of last year's herrings yet lingered, and which would soon be redolent with the bouquet of this season's catch, Colwyn rested on his oars, and swinging the boat broadside to the town, they looked back at its huddled stone houses, at its streets all leading to the sea, and the market-place with its monument to Marshal Keith, the stout old Jacobite who escaped from the '15 to fight the battles of Frederick the Great, and to add one to the long list of Scottish soldiers who for half a century lent a lustre to the military annals of every nation save our own. But I doubt if either of them were thinking of any of these things.

'Will you pull us under the Boddam shore, Mr. Colwyn? We

have never gone up that side of the bay.'

For answer Jack pulled sturdily towards the eastern shore of the harbour. The tide was with him, and they were soon lying a few hundred yards from the sandhills, against which the waves were gently plashing. Then he again lay on his oars, and thinking to himself—for he was prone, I regret to say, as Nellie had hinted, to metaphors of a sporting nature—'Harden your heart and stick in your knees, old boy!' he out and spoke his mind.

'Miss Stewart,' he added, after an appeal more manly and to the purpose than the girl, who sat gazing into the depths of the water, aware that she must hear him out, had expected, 'I have known more and seen more of you than many men see or know of the girls they would marry, and I am certain that you would make me happy; and, Nellie, that my life would not be so empty with you as it has been. I do love you; let me try to make you as happy as you would make me.'

And Jack Colwyn leant forward to hear his fate in a very downright manner.

'I am sorry,' began the girl, in the stereotyped form, finding it by no means so easy to give him his answer as she had expected, for the earnestness of his appeal touched her, and her eyes were full of tears, and Jack through them looked very manly in his flannel shirt and the straightforwardness of his love; and the sun was setting too. 'No, it cannot be, Mr. Colwyn. I knew that you were going to ask me; but I could hardly prevent you. I can only say no. I do not feel towards you, and I am sure I never shall, as a girl should to the man who is to be her husband. I—I am quite sure of it: and I shall be glad if

you will not ask me again, or refer to it. Please to forget that it has happened; and—and, Mr. Colwyn, do not let us be worse friends. I should be sorry for that. I cannot do what you ask: but I have not many friends.'

And Nellie stretched out her hand to him, wilful little creature, and there were softened tones in her voice that few had heard, and the hand that she held out trembled so that his reluctant one could hardly touch it.

'Yes, I will try,' he said quietly and sadly, and looked at the end of his sculls as he turned the boat round.

'We shall be late,' said she, with an attempt at cheerfulness; 'and we have floated so far that the town is quite indistinct.'

Jack made no answer—he was busy turning the boat's head round; and a man cannot, like a woman, on these occasions at once disguise his defeat under careless talk. It was some satisfaction to him to put his strength into the pulling, to grind his feet against the stretcher, and to make the tholepins groan with the strain put upon them, to hear the water washing round the bows with every stroke. Miss Stewart, who had command of the rudder-strings, said no more, but, letting her hand droop into the cool water, watched the ripples that streamed and widened from her white fingers. Maybe, too, from the corners of her eyes she cast a glance of feminine admiration at the broad shoulders and brown arms that were making the little boat bound so merrily. But, after a time, she looked up, and glancing at the shore, said,

'We don't seem to have gone far, when you look at the shore, do we? And yet we must have.'

Jack looked up, and with surprise—for he knew better than she did the vigour he had been throw-

ing into his strokes—observed that they were still abreast, or rather but a little on the homeward side, of the big chimney which they had become accustomed to regard as a landmark. Even while he stayed to look they lost the little distance by which they had passed it, and were in a line with it again.

‘By Jove!’ said he, setting to work at once more strenuously than before, ‘what a tremendous current there is on this side the bay! I remember hearing Peter Jones say that there was one at certain states of the tide; but I had quite forgotten it.’

Peter Jones was the old fisherman from whom they hired the boat; and Nellie looked up in alarm, but was comforted by observing that they were slowly but surely making way. Jack’s powerful strokes were sending them against the current, which beat upon the boat as if the latter were making several miles an hour. But Jack knew that this could hardly go on; he was putting all his strength into the strokes, and if he made no more way than this, even could he hold out, they would not be back until after dark.

‘I had better pull out into the middle of the bay. Will you please to put her head that way? The current runs only along this shore, I fancy, and in the middle we may escape it.’

Suiting the action to the word, he pulled his right scull hard and eased with his left, while Nellie pulled her right string. The current made turning difficult; and Jack, seeing how far the boat is being carried back, pulled a violent stroke or two with his right. In a minute the scull, a hired one, snaps in two, and the longer end has floated far away down the stream. Colwyn cannot altogether stifle a cry of dismay; the imminence of the danger is at once before his

eyes. The now unmanageable boat is in the centre of the current, which, unless help arrive, may carry it into the open sea; and Jack, who is aware that a brisk east wind has been blowing all day, knows full well how short a time the little craft will float there!

Nellie did not so quickly comprehend the situation. She too uttered a cry when she saw the accident and the speed at which the boat immediately began to drift backwards; but the idea of real danger did not at once come home to her mind. She had never been in peril of her life, and the fact that she now was in that peril did not so easily occur to her as to Colwyn, who in the course of his sporting experiences had faced death more than once. Now he turned to make the best of the situation: he threw over his other scull to that side, and while Nellie pulled the contrary string, tried to get the boat round out of the current, as he had been endeavouring to do when the accident occurred. He only did it in the hope that they might be almost out of its influence, and the attempt was futile. Then he bent all his strength and skill to work the boat against the stream with one scull plied at the stern, in the old-fashioned manner; but his efforts were equally in vain. Hardly five minutes had passed since the accident, and already all that he had gained in his twenty minutes’ pull against the stream was lost; the boat was abreast of the tall chimney again; nay, it was seaward of it before Jack had time to note its position. He could guess now that the rough water which marked the entrance of the harbour was little more than half a mile away, if so much, while the breakers which flanked it, on to which it seemed more probable that the boat would be carried, were nearer. In his

pain, as he contemplated the almost immediate crisis, there was no selfishness; it never occurred to him as a satisfaction that they would perish together. If he could only save her! he cared little, genuinely little, at that moment to save himself. But to see her die by his side, to see those hands struggling and that fair face working in the agony of suffocation, while the gray relentless waves rolled on and over it—that did fill his soul with an anguish that almost made him cry aloud. And he knew now, though he hardly dared to look at the white face before him, that she comprehended some part, if not all, of their peril. Yes, Nellie could not but see the white line of breakers that stretched out from the now distant shore across their path, she could not but see how swiftly they were bearing down upon them. Already the distant roar of the waves breaking over the hidden rocks came, with what muttering of threats, to the ears of those two, can well be imagined. When he gave up his attempt to scull at the stern and returned to his seat, she said,

‘Is there any hope?’

Jack was a brave man, and that quiver in the poor girl’s voice, while it wrung his heart, pulled him together.

‘Yes, there is hope, though we are in some danger. Will you wave my pocket-handkerchief on your umbrella? They may see it from the lighthouse at the mouth of the harbour, and notice where we are. No doubt they are looking out for us at the town,’ he added; ‘but we are too far away, I fear, for their help to be of much avail.’

Nellie strained her eyes across the water to where the town could dimly be discerned, and thought of the dear friends who at this

moment were probably looking towards them. The sunset tints were dying away, and the stillness of evening was over everything save the relentless breakers, whose thunder came more and more loudly on the ear.

‘Ha,’ cried Jack suddenly, ‘what an idiot I have been—the stone!’ and he hurriedly caught up from under a seat where it had lain hid the great stone which they used as an anchor when fishing. Until that moment it had been unheeded. The rope was loose, but he fastened it to the seat, and flung the stone, which was now almost their only hope, over the side with all possible speed. Down, down it went through the gray-green water, checking the boat’s progress in some degree before the rope became taut. Would it reach the bottom? and if it did, would it drag or become fixed? and would the old rope stand the strain of the current? Nellie watched him with heaving breast, one hand clutching the seat, while the other mechanically waved the signal of distress. No; Jack gave a groan as he saw that the rope was not long enough; the stone was not at the bottom; still, it very much stayed their progress. They were now being carried along at a quarter of their former speed. Yet he saw that nearly all hope was gone. There were sails in sight, but at a great distance, while the white line of foam was not three hundred yards away. He could do no more; he did not know how to say anything cheering to her. At last he told her that there was some chance yet, for nearer the breakers the water might grow more shallow, and the anchor find holding-ground. From which Nellie knew that all other hope was gone, and gave a shuddering glance at the gray waves, that more and more boisterously leapt up against the

sides of the little craft, as they had not done in the still water nearer the shore. Nearer and nearer, until the thunder of the waves falling on the sunken rocks seemed to fill the air, and the boat rocked up and down perilously. Vaguely she saw her companion writing something inside some leaves of his pocket-book, and nailing the little packet to the seat of the boat with his knife. Then he leant over towards her, where she crouched rather than sat, her eye fixed upon the waves, that struck the side with more and more violence.

'Nellie, let me take your hand. My darling,' he went on, holding the cold trembling hand firmly in his own, 'it will not be very bad. Shut your eyes, and don't watch the water.'

The girl did as she was told, and bowed her head on her knees, while Colwyn sat gazing with pale set face at the white line now close at hand. The sun had altogether gone, and it was almost dark; up above, but beyond the reef, the gleam of the lighthouse was now appearing and disappearing. So they sat a few moments waiting for the end, while the darkness gathered, and the thunder of the breakers grew louder and louder. Then Colwyn noticed that they were getting no nearer. Had the anchor caught? No. The hope died away almost as soon as conceived, and he saw that the current was carrying them no longer straight upon, but rather across the front of, the reef, and towards the centre of the mouth of the harbour. It gave them a few more minutes before the end; the struggle in the rough water might last a little longer than in the foaming surge, but the end would come, and it would be the same. He did not tell Nellie of the change. She still sat; and he clasped her hand,

trying only to comfort her by his presence, until he saw that the boat would certainly clear the reef.

'We have passed the breakers, Nellie; but we are going into the broken water. The boat must soon be swamped; yet we may cling to it for some time, and may possibly be saved yet.'

She looked up at his first words with a white quivering face; but he could not give her a look that told of hope. When she saw the white foam abreast of them, and the great rollers which raised the boat up and down like a cockleshell, and hid at times everything from them but the dim gray stretch of heaving water and the revolving light above, she shudderingly said,

'Good-bye!'

Then, with the faintest pressure of his hand, she bent her head again upon her knees.

He passed one arm round her, that they might not be parted when the boat went from under them—and then he saw that they were saved. There, there, hardly two hundred yards from them, and coming down through the gloom, looking twice its size, was a fishing-smack. The keeper of the lighthouse had observed them and their signal, and given the alarm at Boddam Harbour; the rescuing smack had stolen up on its errand of mercy, hidden from them by the breakers, until the little boat passed beyond the latter. Colwyn doubted if his craft would ride until the other came up, though he hoped to be able to keep Nellie and himself afloat. But he was not to save her life. The little vessel floated bravely until the other was within a few yards; then Colwyn turned to his companion.

'There is hope; there is life. Thank God, Nellie! Look up!'

She did, and fainted; she was but a woman, after all.

The rescuers pitched a rope to them, and soon they were safely on board. Nellie recovered in no long time, and in a couple of hours they were being driven back to Peterhead and their friends. The road was difficult and the drive long; and Nellie had time to think with a shudder of those great gray rolling waves that would for nights haunt her sleep, and with heightened pulse of the man who had done all while anything was to be done, and then had sat down bravely and calmly to face death,

thinking only how he might comfort the girl whose hand he clasped. She reminded herself what had been her morning thoughts of him with a sigh—and a blush. The carriage was rolling over the stony streets of Peterhead, when she leant towards him:

'I told you not to ask me again, Mr. Colwyn, the question you asked this morning. I did not know my own mind or you. If it will please you, I can say now I do love you.'

S. J. W.

'REALLY, TOO UTTERLY—QUITE!'

AH, bring me the sunflower and lily,
Let me live in the glorious sight;
Though Philistines say it is silly,
It is really, too utterly—quite!

Let me twine, let each member contorted,
Show visions æsthetic and bright;
What is art if we are not distorted,
And really, too utterly—quite!

Let the dull-faded green be my raiment,
Relieved by no touches of light;
We'll talk not of tailors' repayment,
For we're really, too utterly—quite!

If æsthetic perfection you long for,
And wish for a bask in the sight;
In the Park we go in rather strong for
The really, too utterly—quite!

'Quite too too! you hear the words muttered;
Ah, yes, the thing here is quite right.
Man and woman are thoroughly 'uttered,'
And are really, too utterly—quite!

A BATCH OF HOTEL-BILLS.

SCARCELY less delicious than the feeling of enjoyment during a hard-earned holiday are the feelings of anticipation and retrospect, and of the two perhaps retrospect is the more delightful. Reality too often shatters the Spanish castles reared by anticipation; there are elements of doubt and fear, anxieties of calculation, qualms about weather, in the process of anticipation which have all been banished, solved, and dissipated by the time retrospect is indulged in. We are more at ease in retrospect, and can fight our battles and dream our dreams undisturbed; and thus it is, I suppose, that a batch of old hotel-bills brings memories of sunshine and storm, of adventures and petty worries, of bloodless victories won, and of ludicrous defeats suffered, which are especially delightful at this time of the year, when the eye pines for change, when the mind aches for relief, and when the body implores a rest from the toil of every-day life.

'Hôtel du Cheval Blanc, Chantilly.' Reading this heading I am carried back ten years, when travelling in France was very different from what it now is. Hans and Fritz were masters of the situation when I put up at the White Horse Hotel, Chantilly. Go where one might, there were Hans and Fritz—singly, or in pairs, or in groups, or in whole regiments. Amongst the leafy alleys of the old forest, fishing from punts in the waters of the White Queen's Castle (not the royal building of Chantilly, but

that little double-turreted box of which the traveller by the Northern Railway gets a glimpse through the trees as he crosses the noble viaduct), mooning about the walks and shrubberies of the château itself, blowing trumpets, beating drums, and performing stolid evolutions on the famous racecourse, swaggering along the streets, drinking and smoking at the *cafés* and *buettes*, everywhere Hans and Fritz. Peace had been proclaimed, it is true; but Hans and Fritz were in possession until the great peace-ransom had been counted out and paid over. The poor landlord of the Cheval Blanc was at his wits' ends. The 'Etap-pen Major' was at the castle; but the officers of the Augusta regiment were quartered upon him, and held their mess in his coffee-room. They paid well and regularly, he said; they consumed good wine and plenty of it; but he was a patriot, and his poor heart burst to see the lanky, square-shouldered, spectacled Teuton officers swaggering and elbowing and clanking about, indisputable masters of him, his house, and everything in it. Of course I was pushed away into a small garret, next door to a long officer, who appeared to spend his nights in performing the bayonet exercise in 'Review time,' such a clanking and a stamping did he make. Was it to be expected that I, who, in the ordinary course of events, would have been salaamed to as a milor, before whom waiters were mute and landlords obsequious,—that I, a poor British tourist with a suit of dittoes and a

knapsack, was of the smallest imaginable consequence in the presence of these sturdy bronzed victors? Never did Briton feel less Britannic than I did, walking about the small streets of Chantilly, shouldered into the kennel by giants in blue uniforms. Yet, let it be said, never did conquerors behave better than did these Germans at Chantilly. There was no bullying, no rioting, no extortion, no drunkenness. At a bit of a row in a *buvette* one evening, a dragoon corporal handled one of the waiters rather severely; the proprietor of the place complained to the officer in command, and next morning Herr Corporal received twelve blows with the flat of a sword.

One day I sauntered down a favourite alley of the forest, and, deeming myself well away from Hans and Fritz, lit my pipe, and began a study of trees in my sketchbook. I had scarcely been seated ten minutes when the sound of distant song smote my ear. Nearer and nearer it came, not inharmoniously blending with the twitter of birds and the whisper of the breeze through the leaves, and soon I had an opportunity of seeing the famous Elizabeth regiment march past me in full force. The men's faces were turned in the direction of the Fatherland; and although their uniforms were patched and stained, and they themselves white with the dust of many miles, there was an honest pride and joy on their faces as they rolled forth in sonorous bass the soul-stirring notes of the 'Watch on the Rhine,' which the most ardent Teutonophobe could not have helped admiring.

Next morning mine host came to me with a rueful countenance. He was desolated, he said; but Lieutenant Stultz of the Elizabeths wanted my room. Of course

I had to go. Quite lately I revisited the White Horse at Chantilly. The little place was itself again, and English jockeys were exercising thoroughbreds where, a few years back, Uhlans and Dragoons caracoled and manoeuvred. There was nothing to remind me of the Teuton occupation save a half-effaced inscription in white paint on a stable-door: '10 Männer, 3 Pferde.' Mine host remembered me, and we cracked a bottle of Beaune together to the happier times.

Coach travellers of the old days knew, and commercial travellers of the present know, well 'The Bull Inn and Posting House, Sittingbourne, Kent.' As I read this heading on the next bill I take up, I call to mind a very pleasant summer week in Kent.

We were on a cricketing tour; had been well beaten at Canterbury, splendidly entertained at Chilham Castle, soaked to the skin but victorious at Faversham, scorched at Gore Court, and were at Sittingbourne for our final match at the Mote Park, Maidstone. A right jovial time we had; hard healthy exercise all day and never-to-be-forgotten sociable evenings. The Bull is one of the old-fashioned houses of call which formerly dotted our great highways, but now that their vocation is gone, only to be met with here and there. Commercial travellers, as a rule, are the monarchs in these establishments; but I rather think that wherever we went, carrying with us our big appetites, and our demands for the best rooms, we ousted them.

What a breakfast we made in the quaint old coffee-room, with its time-stained pictures, its cumbersome furniture, and its latticed windows, before starting on our long drive to Maidstone! And with what genuine pleasure do I

look back to that drive through some of the fairest scenery in Kent! The irreverent manner with which we treated the most respectable of rustics, the refrains we sent out into the pure summer air, the halt at the little half-way alehouse for the horses to take in water, and the driver and our umpire to take in something stronger,—we did not, for we were too old cricketers not to know the fatal after-effects of strong ale at ten o'clock in the morning,—the near shave we had of 'going to smash' down that steep hill which leads into Maidstone. These and a score of other little incidents reappear freshly as I look at the Bull Inn bill. I recall with pleasure the glorious day's cricket on that beautiful ground, with the panorama of wood, hill, and dale spread at our feet; with the red roofs of Maidstone nestling in the sunshine. Nor do I forget the drive back in the calm cool evening; the vision of chubby children cheering us from cottage-gates, of stalwart labourers, trudging homewards from their toil in the broad fields, stopping for a moment to gaze at us wonderingly as we passed. Then the cool bath and the evening at the Bull. Never did steaks taste so richly, or ale resemble more nearly the nectar of ancient fable; and never did ancient rustic finger-worn spinnet give out such dulcet tunes as when the musician of the eleven sang the solos of 'Georgia,' 'When Johnny comes marching Home,' and 'Auld Lang Syne,' and we made the old building ring with our chorus, much to the annoyance of the 'commercial' inditing their business letters, and much to the delight of waiters, ostlers, and 'brickies' assembled at the door. Next day we went our different ways; but recollections of the Bull at Sittingbourne will not

easily fade from any of our memories.

The next piece of paper would not be deciphered by ten Europeans in the City of London, and I have not the slightest idea of its meaning, save that it is a bill paid by me some years back at the 'Bamboo Stem' tea-house in the Japanese village of Miyanoshta.

Every visitor to Japan longs to perform one feat—to make the ascent of the Peerless Mountain, that perfect snow-white cone so familiar to us by the scrolls and lacquer-ware of Japanese manufacture. I was armed with the necessary passport declaring that my state of health necessitated complete change of air and scene, and after three days' hard walking arrived at the little village of Subashiri at the foot of the mountain. Previous to turning in for a good night's rest, I secured my supplies of wood and water, and interviewed the local mayor. He, having turned my pass over and over and entered its contents in a book, informed me that he 'thought' it was in order. Secure with this authority, after a good meal I lay down between the quilts which serve as beds in Japan, and was soon fast asleep. How long I slept I know not; but when all was dark and quiet I was awakened by a policeman with a huge lantern. I angrily demanded his business. With much gesticulation and prostration he informed me that since my interview with the mayor my passport, as it was copied into his book, had been reexamined, and had been found incomplete. I knew that a very strong prejudice had always existed amongst the Japanese against the ascent of Fuji-Yama by Europeans, and I knew that the copy of my passport was as incorrect as the original was correct; so I asserted that I intended to go up the moun-

tain, and defied mayor, police, and all. The officer listened stolidly, then represented the utter folly of my attempting resistance, and furthermore stated that his orders were to escort me back into Treaty Limits at daybreak. I was mad with vexation and disappointment, but the tea-house master and my coolie urged me for my own good not to resist; so I dismissed the officer with—well, a remark, and turned over to sleep.

With the first glint of light through the shutters, I was awakened. I breakfasted, dressed myself, and, having paid my bill, saw that a sergeant and half a dozen manikins in the uniform of his Imperial Japanese Majesty's Police were waiting for me outside. On country duty the native police wear the straw sandals of the people; but as I was a European, and a prisoner of rather peculiar importance, my escort were shod in ill-fitting blucher boots of the stiffest type. My plan of revenge was quickly made. Shouldering my knapsack, I strode off. For some miles my escort kept up very well; but as the sun increased in power, and the roads in roughness, the pace at which I was going began to tell upon them. One by one they limped and lagged behind; then one took off his boots and slung them over his back; then another, and another, until, by the time we had done ten miles, the sergeant alone had stuck to his boots. Poor fellow! He limped along pluckily in the greatest agony, but I was pitiless; I strode on at four miles an hour. At last he gave in, and the whole party were bare-footed; and if any of my readers remember the road, they will sympathise with them. Still I went on: I stopped not for refreshment; the midday sun came scorching down, the stones and boulders cut even my rough shoot-

ing-boots; but my cup of revenge was not quite full. It was quite brimming when I arrived at the 'Bamboo Stem' tea-house, within Treaty Limits, alone. An hour later the sergeant, more dead than alive, turned up, and during the next half-hour the poor little policemen one by one came dropping in. Then I relaxed into mercy, and ordered a good meal to be served to the martyrs of duty. The bill for this little entertainment is the one before me; it always serves to remind me of my complete revenge, but also that I have never made the ascent of the Peerless Mountain.

A little bundle of bills from Thames-side inns conjures up memories of long bright summer days passed in the purest of air, amidst the most characteristic of English scenery, in the easiest of costumes, and with the lightest of hearts. Memories of quaint old hostelries, with funny little bedrooms, and bowers of fresh sweet flowers, and lawns dipping into the water; memories of delicious early morning plunges; of tremendous breakfasts; of good steady work, so diversified by 'easies' under the great trees as to prevent a pleasure from being converted into a toil; of midday meals in pleasant meadows; of more work until the trees and foliage made deep black shadows on the river's face. Memories of many a night pull, when lock-keepers demanded double fees, and inn-keepers grew surly about being turned out of bed. All these memories, and a hundred others, remind me of a brief period of perfect independence and complete freedom from the yoke of Mrs. Grundy, never to be forgotten.

Another little collection reminds me of a pedestrian tour through the 'Garden of England'—Hythe, Romney, Lydd, and Rye (O,

that stretch of marsh between the two last places!),—straight through the Weald of Kent, where the men are stalwart if not amiable, the women comely, the cherries and apples unapproachable; where there are yet old manor-houses with moats and avenues and gables, sturdy and strong as when they were built by men with trunk-hose and lovelocks; timbered cottages, long deep lanes leading in circles to nowhere, village-greens and typical English hamlets undefiled by railways and untouched by builders. Goudhurst and Cranbrook of old smuggling repute, Horsemenden, Tonbridge, Seven-oaks, and so home. And doubly pleasant it is to associate the retrospect of sunny days and sweet labour with universal civility, cleanliness, and moderation in charges.

A bill headed 'The Grapes Inn, Reigate,' reminds me of a very enjoyable 'outing' with that crack Volunteer regiment, the 138th Middlesex. We had but little sunshine and plenty of snow, although Easter did fall late. But we had plenty of good hard work,

plenty of exposure, and half a dozen as jolly evenings as fall to the lot of most men to remember. Tremendous battles we fought on peaceful Surrey commons; great excitement we produced in peaceful Surrey villages, with our fifes and drums, our mounted officers, and especially our real ambulance wagon, which was mistaken for the colonel's private carriage, the regimental larder, and all sorts of other things. To be sergeant of the guard for a whole night after a heavy day's work was a little trying; but if we did not come up to the standard of her Majesty's line regiments in smartness and precision, we excelled them at least in cheerfulness and intelligence.

There are lots of other hotel-bills, but the length of my paper warns me to stop. In conclusion, I may remark that if a man is not an artist, or does not keep a diary, there are few pleasanter aids to the remembrance of past bright holidays than the perusal of old hotel-bills, that is—and it is an important saving clause—if they are not heavy.



THE DEAN'S MEDIATION.

See the Story.

THE DEAN'S MEDIATION.

MISS DORMER was persuaded that Providence had specially arranged her circumstances, so that the bringing up of her orphan niece, Winifred Grantham, should be a crowning success. What could be more conducive to a subdued and wholesome frame of mind than living within the shadow of that grand old cathedral? What influences more desirable than those produced by the conversation of a maiden aunt, and the intimate society of an unmarried Dean and his unmarried sister?

The unmarried Dean bore his perilous position meekly and calmly. He was not blind to the fact that, when in the pulpit or taking an hour's exercise, his portly form was the butt for an artillery of eyes that might have made sad havoc; he was not unconscious that his pleasant generality of conversation was sometimes met by faint sighs and reproachful glances. Yet, like a hero, he bore it all and showed no sign.

When Winnie Grantham had turned eighteen, there was no alteration in the bright freedom with which she had from childhood invaded and cheered the Deanery. So sweet a vision as the golden-haired girl could not but be welcome anywhere; and Miss Dormer, from the serene placidity of forty-four years, passed in entire ignorance of the world and its ways, actually believed that her darling's rosy blushes and pleasant excitement were the result of the edifying conversation of the Dean and his sister. Blessed innocence!

Now you see the Dean had a neighbour, a widow lady, who was

rejoicing in the visit of her soldier-son, Captain Charles Burnett. This gallant young officer had been amongst the many brave fellows who left England not so very long ago, and had the misfortune of emulating the exploits celebrated by the rhyme which says,

'The King of France with forty thousand
men
Drew their swords—and put them back
again!'

And chafing from the recollection of the general disappointment he and other aspirants for British honour and glory had experienced, it was very soothing to have the quiet of his mother's house enhanced by many pleasant hours at the Deanery, where certainly Winnie's bright face was not the least attraction.

Miss Dormer objected to men as a class. She thought it a pity that they existed, and considered them absolutely unsafe unless clad in ecclesiastical garments. This opinion had not been arrived at through any disappointment attendant on the tender passion; indeed, I think the fact that never had her heart been assailed nor her hand sought had a good deal to do with Miss Dormer's very uncharitable views. At any rate, she so firmly adhered to them, that Winnie was afraid to tell her aunt what had made the Dean's house so charming of late; her only confidant, a very safe one, was her dog Punch.

'He's *very* nice, isn't he, Punchie, darling?' always met with an approving wriggle of the short tail that spoke volumes.

At last the Dean could not help noticing that more than common

interest was evinced by the young people; and he was placed in a most awkward position by having the declaration of love made at his house, and being asked to further the gallant soldier's suit.

'Goodness me! Why, Winnie, what made you do this?' he inquired in his perplexity, fixing his glasses on his nose, and staring at the blushing face before him.

'I didn't do anything!' faintly protested the young lady.

'It was my fault, sir! Who could help it?' ardently explained the suitor.

The Dean would have admitted the truth of this if he had not been terribly puzzled.

'I must think it over. Go home, Winnie, and tell your aunt I'm coming over for a quiet talk in an hour's time.'

Slowly and shamefacedly Winnie walked away through the Deanery garden, followed by Punch, who, as appropriate to the occasion, allowed his tail to hang down, and an expression of wretchedness to pervade his appearance.

They went home the longest way with much the air which distinguishes naughty children who have played truant from school, and are painfully aware that they will be castigated on coming before their irate parents.

Having gained the room where Miss Dormer sat in a softly-shaded light, placidly engaged in embroidering a huge sunflower in the centre of a table-cover, Winnie timidly broached her subject, feeling thankful for the shade which rendered her blushes less visible.

'The Dean is coming over in an hour, aunt—I mean half an hour, to have a quiet chat with you.'

'Dear me, how very extraordinary!' exclaimed Miss Dormer, hastily rising. 'Are you sure of what you say, Winnie?'

'Yes, quite sure; and,' she hur-

riedly went on, 'I think the Dean is so nice, so kind, don't you, aunt?'

'He is my most valued friend,' replied her aunt gravely, and looking more and more mystified.

'Then—then—please do what he asks you,' blurted out Winnie, and she vanished from the room, leaving Miss Dormer more tumultuously overcome than she ever remembered to have been before.

Having escaped from her aunt's presence, Winnie retired to one of her favourite retreats—a curious quiet room which opened on the old-fashioned garden. Here she presented the kitten with a saucer of milk, and sat down on the window-sill to think over matters. Punch occupied her lap, and cogitated the *pros* and *cons* of the situation with an earnestness that would have made him the best of advisers if he could only have spoken. Failing that, he would have liked to have bitten somebody.

Very tenderly the Dean managed his explanations, and he had much to bear. The shock to Miss Dormer was great; and her excitement made her express such cruel doubts of mankind in general, that the Dean needed all his eloquence and the exhibition of some personal sorrow to convince Miss Dormer that a sex to which he had the misfortune to belong was not without its redeeming points. Then the good lady assured him that he was the exception which proved the rule, and that *soldiers* were the most unreliable beings; and that after all her care of Winnie it seemed hard, *very hard*! However, he was so far successful that Miss Dormer requested him to go home and fetch that beast of prey, Captain Charles Burnett, that she might consider him and his aspirations.

So it came about that when a manly step, which she could not

hope was anything better than the Dean's, approached the room where Winnie still sat in the window, Punch looked seriously disturbed; and when the door opened to admit, not the Dean, but a handsome broad-shouldered young man, Punch turned his back (whether in disgust or discretion is not known), and the birds in the garden whispered to each other that there was soon to be a wedding.

'What did auntie say?' asked Winnie anxiously, when she found her mind capable of interesting itself in common mortal things.

'Don't clearly remember—nothing very savage.'

'Was she angry with the Dean?'

'She did not yield to any unseemly exhibition while I was present, dear; but you see I was thinking more of you and myself than the Dean; and when she told me to come to you, of course I left them to settle the rest. Suppose you take me over this jolly old garden.'

It was by no means disagreeable, strolling in shady places sacred from the vulgar gaze of menials, and chaperoned by that indefatigable faithful creature, Winnie's dog. Punch thought it right to go with them; but whenever there was a pause in a shadier corner than usual, the refinement of the animal made him affect to be interested in botanical specimens as known by the smell, and he seldom gazed curiously on the lovers. Possibly this was caused by jealousy, as hitherto his own licks had been Winnie's only caresses.

In the midst of one of those bursts of rapture so interesting to two, so hideously absurd to the world at large, Captain Burnett felt his arm clutched convulsively.

'Charlie, I hear auntie's voice close to us!'

'By Jove,' stopping short near an arbour, 'there's the old Dean!'

Old Dean, indeed! The arrogance of young lovers is proverbial. He was only fifty, and she was forty-four—and blushing like a girl.

'This accounts for the simplicity of our arrangements,' whispered the Captain, in high amusement. 'What an old fox that Dean is!'

And then the birds began gossiping again, and this time they announced *two* weddings.

Scandal always gains with each telling; but the facts were these: The force of the arguments he had used in favour of the hopes of another couple first opened the Dean's eyes to the thought of trying matrimony for himself; and but for having had to use all his persuasion to prove to Miss Dormer that 'man was not born to dwell alone,' and that, in consequence, it was the bounden duty of right-thinking persons to help him to double his existence, the kindly Dean would never have discovered that it was possible for a long and pleasant friendship to warm into a tender passion.

'Shall we both be married together, auntie?' asked Winnie mischievously.

'O, no, my dear!' said Miss Dormer nervously. 'I must see you well out of my hands first; and I could not attend to two important matters at the same time.'

'Then,' urged the Dean mildly, but firmly, 'our wedding (a quiet one) shall be directly after these scapegraces are gone; and they can return from their travels to find us at home in the Deanery.'

'Capital!' cried Captain Burnett, who had his arm round Winnie's waist, and was delighted with everything just now. 'Three cheers for the result of "the Dean's mediation!"'

TAIN ON THE RHONE.

A Memory.

ON the line of railroad from Paris to Marseilles, and about half-way between Lyons and Valence, lies the pleasant little town called Tain. There I spent a delightful vacation of nearly two months, September and October in 1879; and thence I visited La Louvescq, high up in the Ardèche Mountains, of which visit I may write another time. All the circumstances of my sojourn in Tain were so happy, that memory recurs to it often, and with great vividness and complacency. I see now the broad and rapid Rhone as it speeds between Tain and Tournon, and the noble bridge that spans it, linking the two towns; the mountains rising abruptly from the river-bank on the Tournon side (the right, on the way to Marseilles); and, half-way up one of the boldest peaks, the white statue of the Blessed Virgin, in bold relief against the dark mountain-side, niched in a natural cleft, standing alone, without shrine or adornment, on the rocky ledge, as though it had alighted there from the sky, and seems to gaze contemplatively and prayerfully upon the river running swiftly below. Tain is a rather dull and unambitious town; but it has its notabilities, its church and curé, its mayor and magistrates, its cercle (club) and rampant politicians, and its important railway station; whereas the opposite and rival Tournon, being on the wrong side of the river for communication with the business and political world, affects a staid character, is moulded quite on the antique, and is thoughtful and in-

tellectual. Tournon is possessed of a very fine and quite famous university, which alone, in the opinion of the inhabitants and many outsiders, casts in the shade all the material and commercial advantages of Tain. All the great men in Tain were educated in Tournon, entirely or partly; so that settles the question of their rival pretensions to fame.

I must tell all I know (which is simply what I saw and heard, for no book supplies one tittle of my information) about Tain. Like most folks possessed of pleasant reminiscences, I fancy that the world at large is deprived of an essential joy until it has shared them with me. I intend to ramble in this paper, because simply I did nothing but ramble while at Tain; there was no system whatever in my proceedings there. I never knew what I should do to-day, or where betake myself to-morrow, and the whole life was one of bright accidents and surprises. Let poetry moon as it lists, and rave about rock and dell and stream and other soulless charms that claim all our homage and our ecstasies, and merely condescend to exist for us in return. Scenes are chiefly pleasant to me, either in fact or in memory, from their pleasant personal associations. The responsive warmth, the humour, character, soul, that are in man, and in man alone, are what render the brightest scenes delightful even after they have passed away for ever from the sight, and make the bleakest aspects of Nature charming.

Country towns above all possess

those elements of attraction we denote by the term 'characters.' A 'character' is made up of originality and simplicity. A 'character' must not be quite virtuous nor vicious, nor foolish, nor wise, nor even strikingly odd. There is nothing common, and nothing remarkably uncommon, in a 'character.' Yet he is a typical being, but typical rather of what we have often fancied than what we have often seen. He has only individual existence, though he belongs to a class; but the class has no unity except in our mind. Each 'character' in real life is different from every other one, and cannot be copied, represented, or reproduced by any process. Tain possesses several characters, Tournon few or none. There will soon be no more 'characters' within the sphere of modern culture. Human nature will have lost its emphasis, its bouquet, and any one man will do as a study, if such a study be worth attention, of the whole human family. What a prospect! Imagine the racy Hermitage of the valley of Tain and Tournon (how my palate exults at the bare thought of it!) assuming the thin flat flavour of the *petits vins* of Bordeaux, or any flavour, however admired, but its own! Welcome the bacchanal phylloxera first! Let him sip the juice in its spring and root rather than it should degenerate and lose 'character.' But I must only wander in Tain, not in ideas.

First, then, let me call forth Dr. G—, my host, with his amiable spouse, and little Joseph, the single sunray of the house, white-haired, dark-eyed, babbling in French and English alternately, as the humour takes him, or perhaps as the father or mother element predominates in him. I met the doctor first in a far-distant and far different scene, where bleak

cliffs that stem the North Atlantic take the place of the vine-mantled mountains of Ardèche; a rough and stormy sea contrasts with the placid Rhone; the fisher's hamlet, reeking with the odour of brine from the ocean, the vintner's sunny home, with its perfume of the grape and its wealth of the luscious produce of Southern Europe. The doctor was then medical officer aboard a French frigate of the line on the Newfoundland station. France still possesses there the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and has a protectorate over her fishermen, who ply their trade along a portion of the coast for a season of the year. The visit of the French vessels of war to the harbour of St. John's, the capital, is quite a yearly event; mutual compliments and salutes are bandied between the officials of the town and the French naval officers; and artillery from land and sea bellows forth signals of peaceful regard that sound like threats of mutual destruction. When a British man-of-war is present, which is often the case, the din is tremendous; and till the smoke clears away, and the joyous pennants are seen flying in upper air over smooth and stately hulls, and yards manned with blue-jackets from peak to mast that look like gigantic combs with teeth turned upward, till this magnificent vision slowly unfolds itself, the mind can imagine nothing but havoc and ruin amid the waters where these monsters thunder and roar at each other. Yet it is all fun and friendship. These yearly visits of marine monsters are very interesting to colonial life, for more and better reasons than the ceremony and festivity that attend them, or for reasons consequent on festivity, and not unconnected with matrimony. Ball partnership in the stiff and stilted society of European cities

may have no practical meaning or result, just as it is devoid of all true spirit of enjoyment. But ball partners in the colonies very often become life partners. Say what you will, artful and artificial beauty of the *salon*, your colonial sister is more artful than you from her very artlessness; and whether from her charming ignorance of the ways of high life, and splendid contempt for what is unnatural in the same, or whether from the very *naïveté* of her effort (happily unsuccessful) to copy those ways, or from that fresh and innocent beauty and grace which, like your spices, you must seek in the colonies, for they do not grow at home; or from all these together, and other qualities requiring a nicer perception than mine to distinguish, certain it is that trained and tried warriors of the army and navy who have run the gauntlet of famed and fashionable beauty in the most select circles of Europe unscathed, fall disarmed and defenceless at the feet of the colonial belle, not in transient admiration, but in lifelong and lawful homage. I speak of Northern colonies, where grows the fair plant that has the pride and the blush of its mother stock, besides a freshness and delicacy all its own.

Doctor G—— met, wooed, and took off with him to his home in Southern France one of the best and sweetest young ladies in N——; one who realised completely the charming picture of Virginia while adorning it with all the graces and accomplishments of our modern life and culture. I knew her well for years before the fatal French frigate arrived, saw her blossom from girlhood to womanly perfection, and from first to last recognised in her a type of innocent gaiety with every maiden charm. It was long since I had seen or

heard of the doctor and his wife; but I knew they were somewhere in the south of France, and being on my leisurely way to Italy, I procured their address in Paris. Hence my visit to Tain, where, at last, I am back again.

The doctor has settled down from the slim and trim naval officer to the habits and appearance of the steady country practitioner. His English recollections have tinged his manner and very figure. He retains, of course, his Southern complexion, but is no darker than any of our English gentlemen of Norman descent. He wears whiskers *à l'Anglaise*, without moustache, and with bare chin; and a tall hat—almost the only one I saw in the place—and a quiet professional dress, and he is growing portly. He is a clever man in his profession, a splendid host, a thoughtful and affectionate husband and father, and so no ‘character.’ Mrs. G—— I have described; she has lost her bright colour and rounded form to a great extent. Ah, the wild sea-breezes! What balm and beauty of sunny inland clime can blow such roses or bleach such lilies! But in all else she is the gentle, gay, and winning girl of years ago. Mrs. K——, her mother, lives with them, and sighs all day, amid the tranquil beauty of her home, for the ocean-rock far away, where all her memories are enshrined, and her husband and many children lie asleep beneath the rugged firs. Is it not true what I said about personal associations, affectionate memories, binding us to a scene beyond all the power of mere sky and landscape? She, Mrs. K——, has all to render happy her declining years that woman could wish for, and admits this. She spent, to my knowledge, in the far-off land, a life of many trials and bereavements and peculiar

afflictions, and was truly 'acquainted with grief' throughout. Yet she yearns all day long after the scene of her sorrows, can love no other place, and will, I am sure, return there to die of the luxury of woe.

There is but one delightful boy in France for me, and his name is Joseph. 'Monsieur, comment se dit ça en Anglais?' This was one of his ways of having fun with me. 'Why, you imp, you know what it is in English as well as I do!' How we romped in the garden, Joseph and I! How we went forth each morning hand in hand, and full of gravity and importance, with bread-crumbs to feed the fish in the garden-fountain, the '*p'ty p'w'sons*,' impossible to render his chirping by any letters! He had strong English tendencies, too—was fond of the horses and everything connected with yard and stables; brave, and rather inclined to court danger; fair, flaxen-haired, and *northy* in everything except his fiery-black eyes. As a boy Joseph is a 'character': he is a good deal of a quiz, fond of puzzling his seniors, full of quaint conclusions of his own on all manner of things, but waiting times and seasons for revealing them; he can be a thorough little innocent, or a thorough little rogue, according to whim, but is always straightforward and honourable and sensitive to reproof.

Outside the house, in the town, and chiefly in the cercle or club, where I went each evening with the doctor, the true 'characters' were to be met. Let me first try to give a notion of a cercle in a French country town. The cercle is the French substitute for our club-room, but is as different from it as most French things are from English. It is better in many respects, and falls short in others. It is not, like some of

ours, a place for morose silence and moody self-concentration, but a lively chatty place. You find all the leading papers there, but they are not used as curtains to screen a reader from the surrounding company. On the contrary, no Frenchman appears able to keep his news long to himself. He tells it in every lineament of his mobile features, then blurts it out with emphatic gesture and a delighted smile, or a savage frown, as the nature of the news may suggest. Nevertheless, in the French cercle, however humble the rank of many of its members—and there appears great freedom of admission—a decorum and propriety are always observed that, I believe, would be impossible in a like institution among Englishmen. I speak here of a country club-room, such as that of Tain, where every class in the town was represented; where there was a 'brasserie' connected with the room, and billiard-tables and card-tables at hand, and every shade of politics admitted, both in the papers lying on the tables and in the members who read them.

This cercle was strongly Republican dashed with Radical; but there were Legitimist and clerical organs received, and some members with those views always present. Yet I never heard what might be called a dispute or contemptuous epithet. Coffee was used by nearly all in their after-dinner visits; very few affected the *petit verre*. Beer (becoming very popular throughout France) of a light description was drunk sparingly, and not much smoking indulged. In fact all were sober, self-restrained men. It was amusing to hear those whose views agreed get together and discuss, generally very cleverly, government measures. The Church comes in for a wonderfully large share of re-

strictive cercle legislation. What is to be done with the curés if they will not chime in with the ruling ideas is a great topic in the cercle. I should have been horrified at their pending fate, did I not know well that most of these men (the doctor especially, who was always moderate, and is too kind-hearted even to assume the ferocity of a true Republican) have intimate friends amongst those same curés, and are as likely as not to open their arms to the first cassocked figure they meet, as they leave the club with wrathful faces, and press him to their hearts. Many of the French—I may say most of them in the country—who have political opinions, create for themselves an ideal curé, whom they hate with fierce malignity, and torment him in their wrathful fancy. But they are on excellent terms with the real curé, whom they respect, and cannot help respecting, for his simple virtues and blameless life, present to their view and open to their criticism every day in the year. If you cite him, they say, 'Ah, oui; *notre curé*—c'est autre chose.' Strange, too, that the moment the ideal curé becomes realised, or even remains ideal, in any other nationality except theirs, he is not half so detestable—nay, may be, especially if English, quite a safe companion. This was the character I maintained among them, though I am sure that, except for the greater freedom (permissible to me as a stranger, but not certainly to a clergyman resident among them) with which I mingled with them, there was nothing in my manner or language to sanction or harmonise with their anticlerical opinions. True, I was not always horrified where a French clergyman would have been horrified—either because I did not believe there was substance in all this froth, or because I was ready

always to admit the portion of truth and reason that, in my experience, is always to be found in the most extravagant tirades. I have always believed, too, in respecting the choice and judgment of a nation; and as a Churchman adapting myself to it in all that is purely political, and making allowance even for transient encroachment in the heat of conflict on our grounds, till the line be well marked under the new system of things. However, I did not take it at all as a compliment to my clerical character when it was pretty publicly declared in the cercle that as a curé I was just the man of the day; and I doubt strongly that the bishop of that region would have welcomed me into his diocese on such a recommendation.

The principal 'character' frequenting the cercle, or dwelling in Tain itself, was an old gentleman whom I find recorded in my notebook as the 'gourmand.' Indeed, I believe I never knew his real name, nor asked it, though he is quite a notable and wealthy person in Tain, and we met every day, and were on most intimate terms. This gentleman is a politician of the Danton school; in language, at least, a ferocious and blood-thirsty Republican; in manner a rough, but really kind-hearted and hospitable, man; but all his other tastes and fancies, every energy of his mind and will, centred in one ruling passion, *la gourmandise*. He was a politician only by fits and starts, a *gourmand* always; a revolution in Government had no interest for him in comparison with the turning, at the right moment, of a *sauté de poulet*; and I never knew him once to enter on a discussion of any kind without either beginning or ending with a description of his last effort in the *cuisine*. He was certainly nearly seventy years of age, yet never

apparently gave a passing thought to anything except eating. Not a luscious article for the table could be exposed in any window or on any stall in Tain but he knew of it, hung over it, cooked it in fancy or reality if it promised a successful effort of his art. I met him over and over again on his return from one of his expeditions, and enjoyed the racy enthusiasm, the downright poetry, of his descriptions of a fresh tongue, a new sort of sausage, a specially tempting fowl or turkey, he had seen in his morning rounds. Indeed, he was rarely to be met without some article for the table hanging from some part of his person; he never carried a basket or satchel—O no, he loved to parade his treasures, to expatiate on them in the public thoroughfare, to halloo to any appreciative person across the street, or in the distance, and beckon him near to inspect his purchase. Nothing, however, gratified him more than a visit, not in the sacred hours of cooking, but after, when he produced the fruit of his skill in all the glory of transformation; pointed out the mottled marble, so regular, so softly subsiding into red and white tints, in a sausage; the rich seaweed colour of his last *pâté de foie*, the dome-like spring of his chicken-pie. And, to give him his due, he was not averse to your exercising your judgment and pronouncing approval by the use of other senses than the eye. But then this was to be done in company, after each appointed guest had paid due homage to his art by individual criticism. Then it was his custom to say, with that depreciatory shrug of his, 'Ah, well, you like this; but it is nothing. So-and-so, this or that sauce or seasoning, did not turn out as I expected; but, all the same, you shall try it. A few fellows (N—and N—and N—and, you know, and

a few others) are coming out to my little place—a cottage and vineyard outside the town—'on Thursday. *L'honneur de vous y voir*, eh? You shall taste this *pâté*; and, O, I have hit on such a salad! *Jamais, jamais, je vous assure*,' &c.

I dined with him several times, in company with the doctor and all the notables, at his 'little place;' and I can truly state that nowhere has it been my lot to meet better company, or to eat a better dinner in a sweeter spot. No gaudy *salon* or cribbed and confined cottage-parlour for the 'gourmand.' O no, by no means! In the garden—trellised and arched all over with vines, and impervious to the sun's rays, or to any influence but the delightful breeze stealing in and rustling the leaves with a sound of silk, and carrying with it the perfume of the ripened grapes—there was laid the long table with its spotless white cloth and rustic chairs set around it. Near by another smaller table equally white, whereon stood great columns of clean plates, and a regiment, a whole brigade, of long-necked bottles, erect and silent, but meaning, without a shadow of doubt, old Hermitage; for this is the country of Hermitage, and all of them who are any way comfortable have lots of it grown old in their cellars. They don't send it all away. O no, they like their native juice too well for that! The 'gourmand' is now in his glory. He is almost blind, and wears double-lensed glasses of a bright-blue tinge; he is in a *clean blouse*. Every one knows he can don the best broad-cloth if he chooses; but he despises fashion and display, except on the table. He wears an old white-felt hat, which he keeps on all the time of dinner; any one else may do the same with his own hat if he likes. 'Perfect liberty,

messieurs ; enjoy yourselves ; life was made for enjoyment ; accommodate yourselves to enjoyment in every possible way, and as best suits your ease and comfort. *Vive la joie !* So the hospitable old reprobate begins. We commenced with a famous salad, either because it was famous, and must be pronounced so to prove our qualifications for the rest that was to come, or because it is the fashion in Tain. At all events, I never shall forget the judicial silence that reigned during the consumption of this delicacy ; the frequent pauses, with eyes raised to the sky and head in attitude of listening, as it were, to the relish of the spicy esculent ; the interrogative glances addressed to each in succession from behind the blue spectacles, but commanding silence for the present, till due time were given for a thorough test ; the mingled modesty and triumph with which the host received the clamour of applause that signalled the consumption of the dish ; the royal wave of the hand at last, deprecating the expected praise, but trembling withal in exultation, while the tongue essayed to pronounce the usual '*Ce n'est rien*'—'*That is nothing, gentlemen ; a poor affair*'—'*Une autre fois*,' &c. It was rich, the scene as well as the salad. After this, the deluge—of viands, of wine, of conversation. They were a clever lot of men ; a young lawyer especially clever, who descanted on the French law of inheritance as compared with the English, and defended, as I thought it could not be defended, the system of partition of property among the children. He was excellently well read in history—which I believe is not the case with all even of our best lawyers—and was thoroughly eloquent and interesting in all he said. We drank the Republic ; I

among the rest without a qualm, for I believe it was the only thing, with all its wrong doings, to save France in her late crisis. And we were all thoroughly amiable and peaceful, if not agreed upon all points ; and we felt the full force of the Napoleonic words that at length issued from the mouth of our host : '*Messieurs, je suis content, très content.*' He meant with us, and with the *cuisine* also ; for his content flowed from ours, and ours from the dinner, and all together from the noble art to which he devoted his declining years. Ah, the old '*gourmand*,' will he ever raise his thoughts above that fat paunch of his ? I fear not. True, he is not a mere glutton or sensualist. He is a student, an artist, an enthusiast ; but his art is a passion, and the passions of old age are incurable. Of course he is not a gentleman in our sense of the word. He is a wealthy man and a respected man, and well conducted—fit to be mayor or grand juror, or what you will, except *curé*. But he is, all the same, a cynical old infidel, who will not even discuss principles, but simply chuckles them out of the way. Then he uses frightful language at times with perfect *sang-froid*, and without a particle of emotion. Indeed, his favourite epithets are quite meaningless, and only used from sheer truculence, and because they have a bad sound, and he seems quite disposed to exchange them for worse, if worse existed. One of his pet bad words is an English word Frenchified ; the worst we have, perhaps, but it has a sweet benediction till it gets the French roll between the teeth of this old sinner. It is a noun too, but he uses it as an adjective and an interjection, and so can bring it into his talk whenever he wishes, or repeat it, as he does, when not

engaged in talking, for mere delight in its badness. He has no children and no wife—that is, his wife is a silent, unseen, devout woman, and does not count for him. They seem perfect strangers to each other, mentally and socially. He is from very nature an old bachelor, lives as such, and glories in it. He is a ‘character,’ not without some—shall I say?—good points; but, after all, not a nice ‘character.’

The doctor's family, brothers and sisters, over the way in Tournon, are nice people. I won't say ‘characters;’ for nice people, industrious, kind, accomplished, sensible people, are never ‘characters.’ The eldest brother owns a large mill outside Tain; he has the finest stock of poultry of all sorts there I ever saw. And many a time we went out of an evening, clutched a fat fowl for supper; and it was good to see the doctor himself in his white shirt-sleeves prepare a delicious *sautés de poulet*. He is as good a cook at a dish like that as the ‘gourmand’ himself. I fancy he, too, has rather a *penchant* for the art; for it was quite a matter of choice with him to attend to the *cuisine* on these occasions. These little evening-parties were delightful, rendered so by the thorough

family feeling between us all, and by the presence and influence of Mrs. G——, Mrs. K——, and the doctor's sisters, all perfect in lady-like manner and sentiment. To them also were due the flowers that decked the board, the sprightly chat and repartee, the permitted cigarette with our coffee, so sweet and soothing because permitted, and because of the consciousness of their enjoying our enjoyment of it. Then the rattle home with carriage and horses yoked with those preposterous collars, with hames ending in a pair of horns a yard long, and hung all round with bells of divers shapes and sounds. We sang to their music as we went, glees and barcarolles in French and Italian, and Joseph screamed with delight. Other evenings we spent at home, alternating between Tain and Tournon, amid flowers and feasting, quaffing rare old Hermitage, enjoying choice music, one of the doctor's sisters being a musician of the first order, and he and all of them good amateurs. So no wonder if Tain and Tournon are sweet to my memory, and that my very dearest wishes and feelings are enshrined in the twin towns on the banks of the pleasant Rhone.

R. V. H.

IN A BRIGHTON TRAIN.

RAILWAY travelling, with all its manifold advantages, can hardly be said, in England at least, to promote sociability. Beyond an occasional frigid interchange of newspapers, or an inquiry couched in more or less polite terms respecting the opening or closing of windows, people are apt to regard their fellow-passengers in the light of unavoidable nuisances and intruders on their privacy, whose presence they are compelled to undergo, but with whom, save the purchased privilege of occupying seats in the same carriage, they have absolutely nothing in common. It is, perhaps, owing to this prevalent idea that the majority of travellers are in the habit of assuming a stiffness of manner and a studied indifference of tone wholly foreign to their usual demeanour, and even of seeking refuge in simulated drowsiness, from sheer apprehension of being betrayed into conversation with their neighbours. There are, however, exceptions to every rule, and I had an opportunity of experiencing the truth of this axiom a few weeks ago.

My destination being a small station on the Brighton line ignored by the express, I took my seat resignedly in a slow afternoon train, dragging its weary length from Victoria to London-super-Mare, and requiring as much time for the single trip as under more favourable circumstances would have sufficed for the double journey. Finding myself in the undisturbed possession of a smoking compartment, I lit my cigar, and

was soon engrossed by the last number of *Punch* until we reached Croydon, where the door of the carriage suddenly opened, and an individual unencumbered with luggage stepped briskly in. The newcomer was a little man, apparently about sixty-five years of age, but hale and wiry, with bright twinkling eyes and a singularly shrewd countenance; he was evidently disposed to be communicative, for before the train had left the station, he volunteered an observation about the weather, to which I responded *de mon mieux*. Presently, glancing at the paper I held in my hand, he abruptly asked me if I had read Mr. Joseph Hatton's history of that periodical in *London Society*, and, without waiting for an answer, informed me that Alfred Bunn's *Word with Punch*, the cost of which was originally threepence, had lately been priced in a bookseller's catalogue fifteen shillings.

'Poor stuff it was,' he went on; 'but they didn't like it at headquarters, I can tell you. Did you ever know that Bunn was fond of cultivating what Keeley called the "conundrum"? Here is one he wrote one morning when I was sitting with him in his room at Drury Lane: "If a mermaid's locks could speak, which of Milton's works would they name?" D'ye give it up? "*Comb-us!*" Ah,' he continued, after a moment's pause, 'many's the smart thing I have heard in my day; but of all the ready wits I ever came across, not one could hold a candle to Hook. Poor old Theodore! the last time

I saw him was at his place at Fulham—Egmont Villa they called it—I was then a youngster about town, and most of his stories have slipped my memory; but I remember one which is worth repeating. Hatchett (of the White Horse Cellar, you know) had asked him to dinner in a friendly way, and, before they sat down, began to make excuses for the simplicity of the fare. "No apologies, my good fellow," said Hook; "what can one expect from a *Hatchet* but a *chop*?"

'Redhill, Reigate!' shouted the porters, as my fellow-traveller concluded his anecdote, and, extracting from his coat-pocket a meerschaum of capacious dimensions, proceeded leisurely to fill it from a sealskin tobacco-pouch.

'I daresay you think me an odd fish,' he observed, when his pipe was fairly alight, 'but you mustn't judge by appearances. I happen to be in a talkative humour to-day; but as a rule I am remarkably reserved, especially with strangers.'

I thought of the barber in the *Arabian Nights*, and of Charles Maurice's '*Parleur éternel*,' but said nothing.

'That is,' he added, correcting himself, 'when I have more than one listener. Two are company, three are none, has always been my maxim. Do you see the inn by the roadside on your left, going up the hill?'

I saw nothing but the approach to the tunnel, and told him so.

'Never mind,' he replied, 'it is there, or was a year or two ago. When this line was opened, I stayed there a couple of days with an old chum of mine; and while we were sitting over our wine—deuced good wine it was too!—the conversation chanced to turn on the theatre, a favourite subject with me. Ah,' said my friend, 'I was a great playgoer when I left

college, and once I was smitten and regularly done. You remember—no, I won't mention names; but when I tell you that the lady in question was the most fascinating creature and the sweetest ballad-singer that ever trod the London boards in our time, you will guess easily enough. Well, it was what the young fellows nowadays call a decided case of spoons with me, and I couldn't rest until I had by some means let her know it. I was a mere lad then, but I had an instinctive idea that it would never do to present myself empty-handed; so, being in funds just then, I went to Rundell & Bridge's, the fashionable jewellers in those days, and selected, on approval, two of the handsomest bracelets they had in their shop, which I took away with me after paying a round sum by way of deposit. Armed with these and a flaming epistle, in which my innamorata was requested to choose whichever ornament she considered most becoming to her, I posted off next morning to her residence in Belgravia, then comparatively a desert; and on my arrival delivered letter and parcel to a very smart waiting-maid, who carried them up to her mistress while I awaited the result—I need not say how impatiently—in the entrance-hall. In a few minutes—hours they seemed to me—a door opened on the floor above; I hailed the sound as a summons, and had already one foot on the staircase, when a voice, the rich contralto of which it was impossible to mistake, arrested my steps. I listened, and heard, in an awfully distinct tone, the following deathblow to my hopes: "Tell the young gentleman I shall keep *both*, and—show the young gentleman out!"

'Yes,' pursued my companion, after he had sufficiently chuckled over this reminiscence, 'she was

a charming actress, and the best Lady Teazle I ever beheld. To see her and Farren together was indeed a treat. Talking of the "cock salmon" reminds me of a starring expedition he made to Brighton many years ago; the theatre was then jointly managed by one of the innumerable Vinings and a dentist of the name of Bew. The latter seldom interfered in the ordinary arrangements, leaving all minor details to his more experienced partner; but on important occasions, and this was one of them, he liked to be consulted. Farren had, of course, been playing *Secret Service*, *Uncle John*, and *Nicholas Flam*; and had a fancy for winding up with *Coddle in Married Life*, but doubted whether it could be done with a single rehearsal. Vining was of the same opinion, and suggested a repetition of the pieces already given. "Pooh, pooh!" cried Bew; "one rehearsal will be ample; take my advice, and have it out at once!" "Are you quite sure, Mr. Bew," said Farren, in his dry way, "that you are not confounding a *comedy* with a *tooth*?"

Here the narrator paused for breath, and at the same moment our train glided slowly into the station of Three Bridges. When we were again in motion, he abruptly inquired if I remembered old Tayleure, the ex-comedian and theatrical print-seller? I replied in the affirmative. "A queer fellow, my dear sir, full of anecdote, and never so happy as when induced to gossip about his early days. He never entirely got over his disappointment at having failed to hit the taste of the town as a comic actor; and I recollect going into his shop opposite St. Martin's Church one afternoon, and finding him hobbling about in a pair of list-slippers, for in his latter years he was a martyr to the gout, "Ah,

sir," he said, alluding to his pet grievance, "they wouldn't have me then, but they would now, I warrant you. I'm terribly mistaken," he went on, holding out his foot, "if that wouldn't remind them of *List-on*; it would, sir—not a *Doubt-on't*!"

"You've been at Lewes?" continued the indefatigable old gentleman, wandering from one topic to another in what Mr. Pelham terms a very 'rudderless' manner.

"A town to be avoided on the 5th of November," I answered, "by those who object to squibs and crackers."

"Exactly. Well, a few miles from there is a country house; and in one of the rooms, legibly written and hanging over the fireplace like a scriptural text, is a really sensible maxim:

"Naething to be done in haste but the
gripping o' seas."

Not far from there used to live poor Tommy Patcham (Patcham wasn't his real name, but that doesn't matter), a country squire afflicted with one shoulder higher—or, if you prefer it, more ambitious—than the other; but as keen a sportsman as you would wish to meet with, never missing a run if he could help it. One day, when out with the hounds, he had the ill luck to fall with his horse into a deep ditch full of water, and lay there for some minutes kicking and plunging without being able to extricate himself. Fortunately, a good Samaritan, in the shape of a labourer, ran to the spot, and with some difficulty dragged him out; but perceiving the excrescence, and imagining it to be the result of the accident, began twisting and turning it with all his might in order to remedy the mishap. Meanwhile, Tommy, half choked with mud and frantic with pain, couldn't articulate a syllable; the more he struggled, the more

conscientiously did his tormentor tug at him; at last, by a supreme effort, he got on his legs, and, with the most frightful contortions of countenance, sputtered out, "Born so, you confounded block-head, born so!"

'We shall soon be parting company,' pursued my voluble acquaintance, carefully emptying his pipe out of the window, and restoring it to his coat-pocket. 'I leave this train at Hayward's Heath, and take another. I presume you are going the whole way?'

'Only as far as Hassock's Gate,' I said.

'Ah, what the Brightonians call the "Assock." Well, then, to give you an idea of the march of intellect in those parts, I'll tell you what a clergyman of a village not a hundred miles from there related to me some ten or twelve years back. You must know that it was his habit, after examining his Sun-

day-school pupils, to hear them repeat the Belief, each boy taking a sentence in turn. One morning all went on smoothly as far as the words, "communion of saints," after which there was a dead silence. "Go on," said the pastor. "What are you stopping for?" The boys looked at each other, and said nothing. Presently, on my informant's repeating the question, the little fellow who stood next to the last speaker, summoning up all his courage, gave the usual pull to his forelock, and blurted out, "Please, sir, the boy who believes in the forgiveness of sins is sick at home with the measles!"

'Now, good afternoon, and a pleasant journey to you, for here we are.'

With these parting words, and a friendly nod, he opened the carriage-door and stumped away in the direction of a train on the point of starting for Lewes. C. H.

THREE SHOTS WITH A REVOLVER.

I.

NATURALLY, considering the nature of my calling, I have been always particularly attracted by the scores of stories—not, I am inclined to think, always based upon actual occurrences—which tell of the ingenious plots contrived by scoundrels to gain possession of other people's jewels, especially diamonds. In many cases such stories are, of course, but pure fiction. But as to those which profess to narrate facts, whether plain or coloured, I have only too much reason, from personal experience, to suspect that the real owners of jewels have, very often, more to do with their disappearance than easily-imagined brigands, swindlers, or thieves. Nevertheless, there is enough substratum of truth to make even purely-invented stories of this kind probable. Mine is not an invented story; but my reason for telling it is not so much its truth as its supremely extraordinary character. Its like, in any single detail, never happened to anybody else in the world. Were it not for this, I would assuredly refrain from adding to the pile of jewel-stories in which some jeweller's agent plays the part of hero or victim. For I was myself agent to a very great firm of jewellers in London—I need not say to whom—when there happened to myself that terrible experience, terrible almost beyond the power of words to describe, which I am, for the first time in my life, about to try to tell in words.

I remember, as if it were yes-

terday, how one of our partners called me into his private room, and said to me,

'Morris, I must ask you to be good enough to start for Paris this very evening—that is to say, by the very first possible train. You know that parure of the Princess Mouranov that we had to put into new settings?'

'Of course I do.'

'Well, you know the Princess as a customer, she is rather flighty; but she's too big a gun for us to disregard her whims. The parure is just out of hand, and was to have been delivered to her in Portland-place to-morrow morning; but—it's just like her—she's taken it into her head to set off on a voyage to America, and, an hour after she took the whim into her head, she was off, so I hear. It's just like her, anyhow. I believe she goes to Patagonia, where her diamonds—that is to say, her parure—she thinks, will be indispensable to her. I shouldn't have thought so myself, but I suppose she knows. Anyhow, she's going to spend the whole of to-morrow in Paris, and her diamonds must be delivered to her there, and *paid* for—you understand. If we don't deliver the parure, she'll never forgive us; and if she doesn't pay before going off Heaven knows where, why, we shall never forgive ourselves. You'll have to be sharp, for it doesn't follow that she'll stay in Paris a whole day because she says she will; and you'd better avoid having to follow her, if you possibly can.'

'Naturally! Where is Madame to be found?'



THREE SHOTS FROM A REVOLVER



'At a place called Les Bosquets. It's outside Paris; but here's the address written down. I needn't tell you to be cautious—'

'Why?' asked I. 'It all seems simple enough. I've only got to give the parure to the Princess—into her own hands, of course—receive the money, give and take a receipt, and come away. There will be no difficulty about the Princess's money, I suppose?'

'No. But, don't you see, I'm afraid you're still a trifle young, Morris. Those Mouranov diamonds are as well known to all the diamond-hunters in Europe—and they swarm abroad—as they are to me. Better than they are to you, by a long way. By some means or other, you may take your oath, one of those gentry will know you to have the charge of them. It's no good taking precautions against that; they'll know all the same, and precautions are only a way of putting people on the trail. Take care you go to the right house, my friend. Take care that you see the right lady. Don't eat and don't drink, however much you may be pressed, till you're safe back at your hotel. Don't shut your eyes till it's all over. If a strange woman speaks to you, cut her dead; if a strange man, knock him down. And—'

'Well, what else? But I'll take care of myself, never fear.'

'You're an unusually handsome man, you know,' said he, with a wink and a knowing smile, 'and I suppose, like all handsome men, you're a bit of a lady-killer—without meaning it, you know. A nod's as good a wink, you know; and you're not a blind horse, whatever you may be. Paris is a lively place, you know, for a man of your make, with diamonds next his heart worth thousands of pounds. It isn't the men I'm afraid of in your case; it's the women.'

Every man likes that sort of chaff; and I was really weak enough in those days to take an especial pride in what I could not help knowing to be my personal advantages. So I was in the best temper as I answered modestly,

'Well, sir, nobody knows everything about all women; but I do think I know enough about a few to guess a good deal about what the rest may be up to. I don't think I'm likely to be come over that way. And I should think this little fellow,' I added, showing him a new revolver, 'will be enough for common odds, not in petticoats.'

'Don't put yourself in a position that'll oblige you to use it,' said my employer. 'And you won't, if you keep clear of the common odds—in petticoats, you know. I must be off now. Call at my house for the parure in an hour.'

Full of confidence in my own resources, proud of the trust that had been placed in me, and altogether in a well-satisfied and fearless frame of mind, I started with the Mouranov parure by the very next train for Dover. The magnificent parure was safely packed by my employer himself before my own eyes, and I placed the packet securely in a case which I fastened round my neck and waist under my clothes with a couple of light but strong steel chains. In effect, the parure was absolutely safe from secret theft—effectually from any violence short of downright murder. I had bidden my mother and sisters a hurried good-bye, without telling even them of the invaluable charge I carried about me. And I arrived at one of the first hotels in Paris without the smallest adventure of any sort or kind. To imagine that any of the fraternity of diamond-hunters, male or female, had been watching my journey, or could

even be aware of it, was simply absurd. To all with whom I came into any slight contact *en route* I must have been an ordinary Englishman, making an ordinary trip to Paris—nothing more. And, for that matter, except with booking-clerks and so forth, I don't think I had exchanged a word with a fellow-creature all the way. That I had never once closed my eyes, I know.

II.

I HAD just ordered some refreshment after my journey before proceeding to Les Bosquets, when—

'Monsieur Alfred Morris from London?' asked one of the waiters.

'Yes,' said I, though wondering how my name could possibly be known to him, seeing that I had but just arrived, and had not even written my name in the list of persons staying in the hotel. Was my 'Yes' a piece of imprudence? I hardly know to this hour.

'A young lady,' he said, in English, 'has been waiting for one hour to see monsieur.'

A young lady, in Paris, waiting to see me! What could *that* mean? My employer's warning came instinctively to my mind. But I could not very well refuse to see her; indeed, it might prove important that I *should* see her. And certainly no possible harm could come of my seeing her in a large and crowded hotel.

'Mademoiselle waits in the *salon*,' said the waiter. So to the *salon* I went, more curious than anxious about who the young lady might be who expected me in Paris, and who knew my name so well.

She was a stranger—a young Frenchwoman, rather pretty and exceedingly well dressed, and yet with something about her that showed she did not wholly belong

to the *beau monde*, if that be the right term to use, for I don't pretend to be a French scholar.

'Monsieur Alfred Morris from London?' asked she, in precisely the same words as the waiter, but in a voice and accent which made the words sound very differently indeed, and made the girl herself look really instead of only passably pretty. Indeed, hers was one of the very sweetest voices I had ever heard.

'At your service, mademoiselle,' said I, with a bow.

She smiled; and her smile was very sweet indeed. 'I am truly fortunate,' she said. 'I was beginning to fear you would never come.'

'And may I ask, mademoiselle, with whom—'

'Assuredly, monsieur. I am Mademoiselle Lenoir, principal *Demoiselle de Chambre* of Madame la Princesse de Mouranov—'

'Ah!' sighed I, a little disappointed. It was no adventure, then—only the affair of the *parure*, after all. Still—well, considering everything, that was perhaps all the better. Adventures, till the receipts were exchanged, would certainly be *mal à propos*.

'Yes; of Madame la Princesse de Mouranov,' repeated she. 'I am in all the confidence of madame's toilette—you comprehend.' She was speaking in very good English, with an accent that improved my native language, it seemed to me. 'Madame received a telegram from London, from your firm, saying you would be here to-day. It was a careful telegram, monsieur—and that was well. It is not prudent to let all the world know what you carry—without doubt nearest to your heart, monsieur! Have I not reason—I? But madame has changed her plans—that is the *habitude* of madame. I always know what madame will not do next, for it is

always what she shall not say. She was for America last night: to-day, she is for Biarritz. But she will want the pa—the affair monsieur knows of—all the same: all the more. Even so, she was going to Les Bosquets: in fine, she is not at Les Bosquets, but at the Villa Stefania, her own little house where she goes to be alone. Ah, madame will love to be alone at times—sometimes for one whole half-hour, monsieur! But she must have the parure on the instant, and in her own hands, so I come from madame myself to conduct you to Villa Stefania without delay.'

All this was fully in accord with all that I had ever heard of the eccentric restlessness of this great Russian lady, nor had I the faintest reason, after hearing of the telegram from my employers, to doubt the simple good faith of so pretty and altogether attractive a young lady as Mademoiselle Lenoir. Still there was one obvious precaution that I ought to take, and I did take it; for I wish to make it absolutely clear that I acted in all respects as the most prudent of men could have done.

'Mademoiselle will permit me to ask,' said I, 'simply as a matter of business form, if she has the written authority—'

'Of Madame la Princesse? Assuredly,' said she, with a bright smile. 'It is good to treat with a monsieur of the prudence of monsieur!' She handed me at once a little sealed note, perfumed and gracefully written, that ran as follows:

'Villa Stefania, January 12.

'Monsieur Alfred Morris, on the part of Messrs. —, will have the goodness to accompany the bearer, Mademoiselle Lenoir, to the Villa Stefania, without any delay, there to execute the commission with which he is charged.

'STÉPHANIE DE MOURANOV.'

I have that note still, to remind me of— But the end is not yet come. Suffice it that doubt, under the circumstances, never entered my mind; nor, I dare to swear, would it have entered the reader's, had he to judge before the event, as I had to do.

I found Mademoiselle Lenoir an exceedingly pleasant companion on the way to Villa Stefania, which fancifully - named residence we reached in about an hour and a half, partly by rail and partly *en voiture*. I supposed it some eccentricity on the part of the Princesse that she did not, as she certainly might have done, send a carriage to convey us the whole way. Perhaps she was one of those people who take a pleasure in little mysteries and pointless conspiracies. Mademoiselle Lenoir talked the whole time about all sorts of things and places, and I found her sympathetic, intelligent, and singularly well informed, as well as charming. I even began to flatter myself that I had made a by no means unsatisfactory impression upon mademoiselle.

Villa Stefania, where we arrived after darkness had fallen, I could not very distinctly see; but I made out that it was a small house, probably not long built, standing alone and apart from all other dwellings in a sort of shrubbery, and approached through a tiny court past the lodge of the *concierge*. We were at once admitted, without any ringing or waiting. Mademoiselle conducted me up a staircase and along a passage, both scarcely half lighted, into a room so dark that I could scarcely see where I was, or anything at all.

'Imbeciles!' cried Mademoiselle Lenoir. 'Not a light in the *salon*, not even a candle! That is how one is served when one has twenty servants, monsieur, each with his

duties: we must have a twenty-first, to do nothing but see that the sconces shall not be empty in the *salon*—unless, perhaps, it shall be some fancy of madame, for nobody to know you are here. I will see. Monsieur is a brave man? He is not afraid of being left alone in the dark till madame shall arrive? It will be in one moment, monsieur. Madame is anxious, very anxious, for the—'

I thought my being asked to wait in pitch darkness a little odd, but I could only say,

'It is many years since I believed in Bogey, mademoiselle.'

'*Bien*. It shall not be long.' And she was gone, closing the door behind her, if my ears told truly.

Without believing in Bogey, it is not a pleasant thing to be left alone in a strange room in the dark, all the same—fancies will come into one's head, especially when the seconds grow into minutes without counting themselves on a visible watch-face, and when one has on one's person diamonds worth many thousands of pounds. Everything was all right, of course; and yet I could not help wishing that the Princess Mouranov had received me at Les Bosquets by the light of at least one candle, if not of day. And, though I was but a tradesman's *employé*, common French courtesy should not have kept me quite so long waiting for a light, even though a fine lady might not be ready to see me the very instant I arrived. I felt my way to a very comfortable sofa, on which I sat down, and waited on, waxing impatient, and feeling rather like a prisoner condemned to the dark cell. Manners forbade me to doze or whistle, and—

But impatience was soon to change into something more.

III.

WAS that sound of voices in the room or no? If not in the room, close to the room it must have been; for I heard them plainly—sometimes darkness itself will strangely sharpen our ears, and there are certain words which, once heard, sharpen them yet more keenly.

I heard three voices. One was Mademoiselle Lenoir's. One was a strange woman's. The third was a man's.

'Neatly trapped enough,' said the last, so slowly, in the German manner, that they brought their whole significance home to my dull British ears.

'But for the rest,' said Mademoiselle Lenoir, 'what ought one to do? If he goes back to England—'

'He must not go back to England,' said the voice of the other woman—it was singularly cold, firm, and clear. 'He must not leave France; he must not leave Paris till we are safely gone. Those diamonds—'

'If the worst comes to the worst,' said the man, 'what then? We are man to man. If he does not behave himself, he will have to reckon with me. These things are awkward, because of the police. But—'

'He will not resist,' said Mademoiselle Lenoir. 'And if he does—'

I thought I heard a sigh, so sharp had my ears grown. But from whom came the sigh? Whether from Mademoiselle Lenoir or that other woman I could not tell.

'If he does,' said the man, 'be it on his own head, whatever comes. You understand me, my friend. I do not like too much blood; but if there be resistance, there must be—what there must be. He must not trace the diamonds, nor you.'

It had all passed through my ears to my sinking heart long ago. Fool that I had been to listen to a woman's story, however plausible it might seem! Some plot, invented and carried out with fiendish cunning, had brought me into a den of robbery and murder. I was to wait for death in that lonely house and that horrible dark chamber!

What, in the name of Heaven, in the name of desperate helplessness, was I to do? The voices grew confused, then ceased altogether. I was alone. Nobody knew me in Paris; nobody would miss me there. If I did not return, my employers would set me down as having run off with the jewels; my mother and sisters themselves would believe me guilty, and break their hearts and starve. Could I escape from the house? Impossible — through unknown passages and a locked door!

Instinctively I felt for my revolver, useless as it must be in a dark room. The murderer, or murderers, knowing the premises, could be upon me at any moment, and have me down before I could know of their approach; and one must have some faint light for an aim. I had known that all sorts of atrocities are even more common in Paris than in London; but how could I dream that such a doom as this, all for believing in the smooth tongue of a pretty serpent, would ever be mine? I say I felt for my revolver, though knowing all the while how vain a toy it would be now. A knife for close quarters would have been ten times its value; and that, too, would have been vain. I don't think myself less brave than other men, yet I could not help a groan of despair at the thought that I was about to be murdered so helplessly, so hopelessly. How soon would it be?

I drew out my revolver, and, in doing so, a little fusee-box, with a few wax matches in it, fell on the floor. One moment's light would be something, though the last gleam I was ever to see. I groped for the box, found it at my feet, and struck one of the matches. Heaven! what met my eyes? The gleam of flame had indeed come not a moment too soon.

Straight in front of me, coming towards me through an open door, was as evil-looking a ruffian as I had ever seen; a murderous ruffian, if ever there was one, hideously livid, and with eyes that glared towards mine. Thank Heaven for that one gleam of light! It might be enough for a straight aim. . . . No time must be lost. . . . I am no fighting man, Heaven knows. . . . But . . . I fired.

For a moment the smoke clouded my eyes. But I heard a cry. The flame from my match had not wholly died. And by its light I saw — Great Heaven! I had not had one murderer to deal with. A whole gang of brigands were upon me and my diamonds. What was to be done?

Five more brigands at least were there. Well, I dared not pray for so hopeless a thing as life; but I would at least be true to my trust, and sell it dearly. My name, my honour, might yet be saved. First to right, then to left, I fired, and fired again — twice — three times —

And then the match went out, and left me to the mercy of the robbers and cutthroats into whose hands I had been drawn by a woman's words.

IV.

SUDDENLY a blaze of light filled the room, so bright, that my eyes,

till now blinded by darkness, were more blinded still.

'What madman is here?' cried a woman's voice—that other woman's, not Mademoiselle Lenoir's. 'O! O! O! My poor, dear, beautiful boudoir! Send for the gendarmes!'

Was I alive? I suppose so, since I could still hear and see. And how can I describe the scene that I beheld?

I was in an elegantly furnished room. On my left hand, with clasped hands, gazing at me with a face full of amazement, was Mademoiselle Lenoir. On my right, looking at me with wild looks of mingled anger, despair, and terror, was a handsome lady, who resembled a queen of tragedy.

'O Amélie!' cried the latter.

'O Madame la Princesse!' echoed Mademoiselle Lenoir.

'My favourite clock!' moaned the right-hand lady.

'And three whole mir—' mademoiselle was beginning, when I felt my arms grasped tightly behind my back, and a man's stern slow voice in my ear:

'Who are you? Are you madman or brigand? What does this mean? Who are you that make havoc with the boudoir of Madame la Princesse de Mouranov? Who, I say?'

I must confess it at last! I am a little near-sighted; and, by the dim light of the match, had mistaken the sixfold reflection of myself in the panels of an octagonal room lined with large mirrors for a band of murderers.

And that talk of death and diamonds behind the wall? Well, as I learned afterwards, the Princess Mouranov was, as it seemed half the world knew, busily occupied in flying from the pursuit of a husband from whom she was trying to keep not only herself, but her famous diamonds. Her eccentric movements had baffled him for long; but the temporary sojourn of her parure with our firm had nearly put him on the traces. Read the talk by the light of this and you will understand—even the big talk of Madame's last champion, a German Baron, who did meet the Prince in mortal fight with swords, and came off second best with a gash that went through his sword-arm. Who has got the diamonds now I neither know nor care.

But as for revolvers—well, if you must keep such awkward things at all, you can't spend three shots from one better than in obeying the precept,

*'Brise le miroir infidèle
Qui vous cache la vérité.'*

Smash every lying looking-glass, whether it tells you you are a murderer, or whether—as is more common—it tells you, as my own, once upon a time, used to tell me, that I was a handsome as well as a near-sighted man. Alas, since that terrible night, no looking-glass dares to tell me that I am handsome any more. For I never saw an uglier ruffian in my life than my own double seen by the light of that fusee.

LAZINESS.

I've nothing to do ; in a hammock I swing,
And my thoughts they think—think of anything.
I fill up my pipe, and then I think
Of the waste I've made of paper and ink :
Verses and prose of no earthly use—
The scribbling mania's my only excuse—
Of the number of times I have been in love ;
Of exactly how often I've lost a glove ;
Of the people I've met and the people I've missed ;
Of how many girls in my life I have kissed ;
Of how many more I couldn't get ;
Of how many times I have been in debt.
And then to light my pipe I pause,
And think of things with smoking for cause.
I think of what I have done and seen ;
Of the man I would be and the man I have been ;
Of resolves I've broken as soon as they're made ,
Of an aimless man sinking into life's shade.
I think of all I have studied and read,
And I think of a blind man, a cripple in bed ;
I think of an idle and purposeless youth,
And I think, ' Have I found out the meaning of truth ?'
How oft I was angry, ill-humoured, and swore ;
Of how many pebbles are washed on the shore ;
Of how many actions I've done that are good ;
Of how many herrings you'll find in a wood ;
Of things that bore me ; of things that I hate ;
Of an afternoon dance which breaks up at eight ;
Of how many times I have wasted my cash,
And spent lots of money on nothing but trash ;
Of how many times I have wished you were here ;
Of how many wishes I've wished in a year.
I was smoking a pipe, unless I mistake ;
How long have I slept, and when did I wake ?

B. P. W.

OUTLINE TOURS.

BY AN OLD RAMBLER.

THOSE who desire to make an excursion to foreign countries on a small sum of money are generally also restricted in point of time, which is rather a dilemma. For on the Continent, and more especially in France, the quick trains are also expensive trains, to such an extent as to be prohibitive for the humbler traveller. Thus the visiting of Switzerland or Italy, seeing that they are almost invariably approached by way of Paris and Lyons, has come by too many people to be regarded as a luxury quite beyond their means. The object of this paper is to show to those who have only a fortnight, or perhaps even less, at their dis-

posal, how they may see some of the most attractive localities in Europe without having their holiday unduly eaten into by the delays which belong to cheap travelling. To take a case, Italy—that is to say, the Lago Maggiore—may be reached by a man who can do twenty or twenty-five miles' walking per diem for three days, at a cost of 2*l.* 9*s.* 2*d.* for mere riding; or if he is particular, and would find himself in Italy proper, 2*s.* 3*d.* (2.70) more will land him at Arona, at the southern end of the Lago Maggiore, two or three hours' distance from Milan by rail. These are the fares, the time taken will be seen presently:

ARRIVING		£	s.	d.
	London to Antwerp (return, second, G.E.R., 2 <i>4s.</i>)		0	12 0
Sunday	Antwerp to Brussels		0	1 6
Monday	Brussels to Basle (return, second, 2 <i>l.</i> 16 <i>s.</i>)		1	8 0
"	Basle to Lucerne		0	4 0
"	Lucerne to Flüelen		0	1 11
Thursday	Biasca to Locarno		0	1 9
		£2	9	2

The most convenient way of reaching Antwerp is by the Great Eastern Railway, whose boats leave Harwich four times a week. In the summer the train which corresponds with the steamer leaves Liverpool-street at 7.10 in the evening. On the arrival of the train at Harwich, the steamer leaves for Antwerp, arriving there about nine o'clock next morning. This gives the traveller a pretty good day to look about him in Antwerp or Brussels, as the train which leaves Brussels for Basle does not start till 7.30. P.M. The

amount, 12*s.* for the passage across, is arrived at by halving the cost of a second-class return-ticket from Liverpool-street to Antwerp, which allows you to come back any day within two months, as also the privilege of using the Great Eastern boat from Rotterdam in returning home, instead of from Antwerp. This is sometimes a great convenience, as will be seen later. It may be added that the second-class accommodation of the newer boats of the G.E.R. is admirable, as good as any man need desire, especially in point of roomi-

ness, light, and ventilation. This is more than could be said of the fast steamers of this line a few years back. I am obliged to mention this, because, if one arranges to start on a given day, I do not see how he is to make sure that the steamer which is to carry him across the water shall be one of the improved pattern.*

When the traveller has arrived at Brussels he may as well take his knapsack to the station commonly known as the Luxembourg Terminus, and deposit it there, if he has any margin of time to stroll about the city. Half an hour's walking will take any one from one station to the other, but at the end of about twenty minutes the traveller should ask to be directed to the Gare de Luxembourg, as it lies down some streets to the left of the long boulevard or ascent which leads to the superior quarter of Brussels.

A few minutes before the starting of the train *viâ* Luxembourg, &c., to Basle, you get at the ticket office or window a *billet de plaisir*, second-class express, allowing a month. It is a little book composed of double tickets for several places such as Luxembourg, Metz, and Strasbourg (I think), where you can break your journey if so inclined. At any rate, you are interestingly reminded during the night and early morning of the incidents of the late war by seeing the names, or hearing called out, Thionville, Metz, Strasbourg, Saverne, &c., and by the train's winding amid the wooded gorges of the Vosges. It may be added that you will not hear Thionville called out in the stillness of the night, but 'Diedenhof,' local slang for Diedenhofen, the German name

for the place. The Teutons being in possession, their language prevails.

A little before ten the train from Brussels finds itself in Basle, where there is just half an hour's breathing space before the train for Lucerne starts. This brief interval is best used by getting a ticket, which can be done at once, and by getting breakfast in the third-class waiting-room, 'Wartsaal, III. Klasse.' There you will obtain for a half franc (5d.) coffee and the fanciful little *pains*, which are soaked in the coffee (you see them in Germany everywhere), butter also, as much as you care for.

During the ride to Lucerne a very fair diorama of Swiss scenery can be observed by looking out of the carriage-window on the westerly or right-hand side, always supposing the weather to be clear. Immediately on the arrival of the train, which takes you down to the quay, the steamer starts for Flüelen, at the other end of the lake, the only delay being caused by getting the passengers' baggage transferred from the train to the boat, which is sometimes a tedious affair from the quantity of it. However, the vessels which navigate the Vierwaldstätter See (local name for the Lake of Lucerne, the 'Lake of the Four Cantons') are splendid examples of their class, and keep their time like a clock.

Between 2 P.M. and 4.30 the traveller finds himself hurled, so to say, through some of the grandest scenery in Europe, a magnificent highland lake of most savage wildness. At the end of the voyage he is deposited on his legs, to enjoy a thorough good stretch of exactly three days and nights, which are devoted to crossing the St. Gotthard. During that time the traveller of scant leisure will have ample opportunity to shake himself clear of the grime and stuffiness of cities and railway

* The writer has since learned that the Antwerp service will be performed exclusively by new steamers; that towards Rotterdam almost so.

trains; on which account no apology is offered for, as it were, hurrying him to the scene of action, which is well worth hastening to if only the weather deign to smile. Of that of course the walking traveller takes his chance, and takes a waterproof too.

If the days are long, the balance of hours between 4.30 and sunset will suffice to bring a good walker as far as Amsteg, said to be ten and a half English miles distant from Flüelen; a very fair preliminary canter for one who proposes to trust himself to his legs mainly for conveyance during the next few days. Indeed, before twenty-four hours have elapsed from the time of leaving the steamer, if the traveller starts in pretty good time in the morning, splendid examples of the beauties of Alpine scenery, so far as they may be seen from a road, will have been obtained, always supposing the weather allows you to see anything. The writer has been over this piece of road in rain which came down, as it were, in lumps, the few crags that could be seen near at hand roaring and reverberating either with thunder or the explosion of mines. And he has come by it when the sun was tinting the early peaks into the likeness of burnished copper, wonderfully showing up the snow-clad wastes behind.

At Amsteg, the Post (or Stern), Hôtel de la Poste, is a comfortable resting-place. So much may be said, I believe, of nearly every hotel which is in the same house as the post-office. Here I may give the economical traveller a useful hint. Nearly all Englishmen, I imagine, have the idea that when there is but one hotel in a mountain village, the traveller will be made to pay—too much, that is—for his accommodation. The walking tourist will find, if he keeps his eyes open, that these

establishments have what may be called a second-class dining-room, where people of the country who come on business get their refreshment. You may be sure the Swiss don't spend what even a moderate Englishman would expect to 'shell out.' The room I speak of will very likely be only divided by a door from the superior apartment where English travellers who can afford it keep themselves select, and get waited on by males in correct costume. As we are for the moment in Amsteg, I will try and describe the second-class or commercial room there, and what I saw in it. The room itself is twenty or twenty-five feet square. Two sides of it are occupied by long tables, with forms back and front, much as in a schoolroom. At one of these tables travellers sit down and drink their beer, wine, or cup of coffee; or a cloth is spread for them if dinner or supper be the thing required. On a third side a door opens into the host's *bureau* or office; the kitchen is opposite, across the passage. The fourth side of the room holds the door into the passage and a kind of buffet, where anything people want to drink can instantaneously be taken down from the shelves. The buffet has no counter before it, but is more like a dresser; and at the table near to the buffet the girl who attends washes her glasses or sits down to needlework in the interval of her ministrations. During the few hours I was there I had a specimen of how these home-like-looking rooms are used, sufficient, I think, to prove that a traveller of modest desires may instantly find himself among pleasant faces at each stopping-place if he will.

During the first part of my stay at Amsteg the only traveller besides myself was what we call a packman, a draper who goes

from door to door. He, part of the time, was showing the female members of the *personnel* of the establishment patterns of material for dress, making out his bill for something had previously, and so forth, they looking at first one article and then at another, and going across into the kitchen to consult, or may be to show a chambermaid in some distant settlement an attractive piece of material. Business over, or in a lull of it, the hero of the drapery store took something to eat, and very likely had a Schnapps to put him in good-humour at starting. Later on a very ordinary commercial had *his* dinner, with abundant *façons* of course. Between whiles, I think it was, the landlady herself, quite a young woman, came in, attended by her husband, to have a cup of coffee at one of the long tables in this common (in no disrespectful sense) room. She held her handkerchief to her face, so I innocently asked the landlord if madame's tooth ached. He said she had just had a tooth *arraché*, the hideous preparations for which I had seen laid out on a table *al fresco* at the back of the house.

If the traveller cannot easily reach Amsteg on the afternoon of leaving Flüelen, he will find accommodation in a village a mile or two on the hither side of Amsteg, especially now the St. Gotthard Railway is nearing completion. While the works were in full swing, the workmen swamped everything in the way of lodgings, and it was with the greatest difficulty that the writer succeeded in getting shelter for a night. From this latter place the Spitze, or an *osteria* not an hour short of it, is reached in a good day's walk. The *osteria* is but a shepherd's cottage, human life commencing on the first floor; partly, no doubt,

because of the snow in winter, and, perhaps, because the goats and their fodder occupy the *rez de chaussée*. But the traveller who does not mind mountain fare, and kind, pleasant, home-like attendance, will find it here; it is a house of call for wanderers. At the Hospice there is a very fair hotel, for those who will treat the place as a hotel; but beware how you go there, whether from choice or necessity, to get hospitality in the sense originally intended. The day's walk from Amsteg is twenty-four miles. From the summit down the other side through Airolo, to Faïdo, is seventeen miles, which seem like twenty-seven, from the extraordinary winding of the road to get down the steep. The almost interminable zigzags have obtained it the name of the Ribbon-road. In Faïdo perfectly good, nay beautiful, accommodation—looking to the view of the mountains from the bedroom-window—may be had at the 'Sign of the Cross,' which, as it hangs outside the door, seems fairly ablaze in the southern sun. I know not whether the house has a name. Next day a forenoon walk of the most lovely description brings the traveller to Biasca. Thence a ride of an hour and a half brings him to Locarno, at the northern end of the Lago Maggiore. The distance by railway is about forty kilomètres = twenty-seven miles. As the fare, third class, is only 1s. 9d. (2.05), most people who have not plenty of time will prefer the railway to spending another day before reaching the famous lake. After the arrival of the midday train at Locarno, there is comfortable time for a *déjeuner*, in the open air, if you will, close to the landing-place. There you can sit and look round at the glorious scenery if the weather is fine; but you *may* have only the sight of a vaporous frame to a steel-blue mirror, *sub*

Jove frigido, even in August, and your breath may add to the mist.

If the tourist like now to look about him in this beautiful district, if he like to walk round the Lago Maggiore, he may start the same day (Thursday) and reach Canobbio in the evening. There the Orrido, a chasm through which a river rushes, is the sight. Friday, Pallanza, with its splendid prospects might be taken; also Lake Mergozzo, staying at the first place which promises well, after that, for the night. On Saturday, Macugnaga, whose valley affords unrivalled scenery, may be visited. On Sunday, a nice quiet day's walk will bring the traveller to Baveno or Stresa, opposite the Borromean islands. Monday might be given to an eightpenny ride in the steamer to Luino. Thence there is a magnificent walk to Lugano, where there might be time for an hour or two's boating. On Tuesday, the traveller must turn his face homewards. A day's walk will bring him to Bellinzona, another to Faido. Thence, reversing the journey indicated, the top of the St. Gotthard is reached on Thursday; Amsteg on Friday. Amsteg must be left early, so as catch the steamer which leaves Flüelen about eleven. By this the tourist is landed at the railway station (not the town) of Lucerne just in time to embark in the train for Basle that is arranged to correspond with the Brussels express, which arrives at Brussels in good time in the morning. During the summer season the Great Eastern boats do not leave Antwerp till four o'clock in the afternoon, so that there is abundant leisure for a stroll about Brussels or Antwerp, *plus* the journey between the two. The train between Harwich and London, which takes the continental passengers, generally arrives about seven in the morning at Liverpool-street. Thus,

if the programme here roughly sketched is carried out, the traveller will have had a good fourteen days' holiday, and a sight, at least, of Italy, including a little boating on the lakes, for less than 5*l.* 10*s.* mere travelling. The filling in of the outline must be left to the traveller himself, according to his notions of living.

Speaking of Italy reminds one that the steamers on the Lago Maggiore are governed by Roman time, which is twenty minutes earlier than Swiss time. Whence you may be sitting in perfect confidence at a *ristorazione* in Locarno (for example), close to the steamboat pier, feeling that there is yet twenty minutes or half an hour to the time of the boat's starting—by the time on shore, in Switzerland. Before a quarter of an hour is over you are at the water's side, or at the extremity of the landing-place, just in time to see the steamer backing away before paddling off. This has occurred to the writer of these lines. Part of the lake is in Switzerland, and part in Italy, which causes the confusion in the mind of a passing visitor. The *orario* of the steamboats contains a notification about the 'time of Rome,' but it is apt not to be heeded until the matter is impressed upon the traveller by an actual piece of experience.

If on the day indicated for reaching the valley of Macugnaga, the traveller will, instead, work on to Baveno by keeping to the road round the bay, after leaving Pallanza, he will gain time to see the Lake of Como and Como itself. Let him, on the morning after reaching Lugano, leave it by boat for Porlezza, which is as far as the steamers take you eastwards. From it a most magnificent walk of three or four hours conducts to Menaggio, from which Como is reached by steamer. In this way

Lugano is left at ten or eleven, Porlezza reached in about an hour, when there are four or five hours for the walk, and Como is arrived at during broad daylight. Stay there the night, and get back to Menaggio by steamer as early as you can in the morning. In this way you will twice have seen Bellaggio (or Bellagio), which is said to have the finest situation on the lake, besides the innumerable sights of beauty which a five hours' steam (there and back) will afford. From Menaggio, if time is short, take the conveyance usually there to Porlezza to catch the midday boat, which will bring you, *past* Lugano, to Ponte Tresa, at the extremity of another lake which is really part

of Lake Lugano. Thence a walk excelling (because you descend upon the Lago Maggiore) in beauty that from Luino to Lugano, and much shorter, brings you to Luino, whence the steamer must be taken so as not to miss an early train in the morning towards Biasca from Locarno, whether by getting to Locarno that night or by starting before eight the next morning from Luino.

The reader will naturally say to himself, 'This looks very well on paper, but can it be done?' Perhaps the best way of demonstrating its possibility will be to give the mere travelling expenses of two journeys which the writer made to Italy in successive years :

EXCURSION NO. I. (*actually made*).

	LEAVE	ARRIVE	£	s.	d.
Saturday	London	...			
Sunday	...	Antwerp*		0	15 6
"	Antwerp	Brussels		circa	0 1 6
"	Brussels	...			
Monday	...	Basle (24. 16s.)		1	8 0
"	Basle	(Thun) Scherzlingen, the pier		0	5 8
"	Scherzlingen	Spiez		0	0 5
"	Spiez	Frutigen			
Tuesday	Frutigen	Gemmi summit			
Wednesday	Gemmi	Leuk			
"	Leuk	Brieg by rail.		0	1 9
"	Brieg	Anonymous village on the Simplon Pass			
Thursday	Anon. village	Anon. village beyond Sempione			
Friday	Sempione	Villa d'Ossola			
Saturday	Villa d'Ossola	Omegna			
Sunday	Omegna	Stresa			
"	Stresa	Locarno by steamer		0	1 8
Monday	Locarno	Arona		0	2 3
Tuesday	Arona	Locarno		0	2 3
Wednesday	Locarno	Biasca		0	1 8
"	Biasca	Faido			
Thursday	Faido	St. Gotthard			
Friday	St. Gotthard	Amsteg			
Saturday	Amsteg	Flüelen			
"	Flüelen	Lucerne		0	2 0
"	Lucerne	Basle		0	4 0
"	Basle	...			
Sunday	...	Brussels		1	8 0
"	Brussels	Antwerp		0	1 9
"	Antwerp	...			
Monday	...	London		15	6

£5 11 11

This is rather a portentous display of fine-sounding names, and it will be found more so when the reader,

who does not know the ground, studies Murray's *Handbook* and sees what he may get for his money

* This sum is half the first-class fare to Antwerp and back by the General Steam Navigation Company's vessels, which give you a voyage of some twenty hours either way.

in the way of pictures painted by Nature's hand. It is somewhat the way, nowadays, to look upon 'Murray' as old-fashioned. No doubt they, the books, are emphatically the English gentleman's guide, in the old and best sense of that much-abused word, 'gentleman.' The writer can pay the celebrated *Handbooks* no higher tribute than this—that living during his petty rambles on a scale which most Englishmen would look upon with contempt, namely, 4s. a day,

he has yet been glad to make a Murray's *Handbook* his guide as to what was best worth seeing; not as to hotels, of course, for the choice of them was left to be settled by the whim or necessities of the moment. But when the writer has by chance hit upon a resting-place characterised by 'Murray,' the justness of the description has been found remarkable. More cannot be said of a guide than that the wants of nearly all classes are cared for in it.

EXCURSION No. II. (*actually made*).

MILES WALKED.	OUT.	£	s.	d.
<i>circa</i>	London to Antwerp, (return, first, G.E.R., 2L.) .	1	0	0
	Antwerp to Louvain (third)	0	1	4
16	Louvain to Aerschot	—	—	—
	Aerschot to Aix-la-Chapelle (third)	0	4	0
	Aix-la-Chapelle to Cologne	0	8	0
	Cologne to Mayence (return, 8s. 1d.)	0	4	1
	Mayence to Mannheim (return, 1s. 10d.)	0	0	11
	Mannheim to Basle (third, express)	0	12	8
	Basle to Lucerne (second)	0	6	0
	Lucerne to Flüelen (steamer)	0	1	11
64	Flüelen to Biasca (St. Gotthard)	—	—	—
	Biasca to Locarno (third)	0	1	8
	Locarno to Baveno (steamer)	0	1	11
	Baveno to Arona (steamer)	0	1	10
	Arona to Milan (third)	0	3	8
	Milan to Lodi (return, third, <i>lire</i> 2.90)	0	1	1
		£3	8	8

HOME.

	Lodi to Milan (third, half return, 1s. 1d.; excess for second, express, 9d.)	0	1	10
	Milan to Como (third)	0	2	4
	Como to Bellagio } (steamer)	0	1	9
18	Bellagio to Menaggio }	—	—	—
	Menaggio to Porlezza	0	1	0
12	Porlezza to Lugano (steamer)	0	1	0
	Lugano to Luino	0	0	10
20	Luino to Pallanza (steamer)	0	0	10
46	Pallanza to Villa d'Ossola	—	—	—
	{ Villa d'Ossola to Simplon }	—	—	—
	{ Simplon to Brieg }	—	—	—
40	Brieg to Leuk (<i>Louche-Souste</i>) (third)	0	1	8
	{ Leuk to Leukerbad }	—	—	—
16	{ Over the Gemmi to Kandersteg }	—	—	—
	Kandersteg to Spiez	—	—	—
	Spiez to Thun (steamer)	0	0	5
	Thun to Basle (third)	0	6	5
	Basle to Mannheim (express, third)	0	12	8
	Mannheim to Mayence (half return, third)	0	0	11
	Mayence to Cologne (half return, steamer, 8s. 1d.)	0	4	0
	Cologne to Rotterdam	0	6	0
	Rotterdam to London (half return, steamer, 2L.)	1	0	0

On this occasion the steamer was late in reaching Antwerp. The writer missed the train by which

he proposed travelling to Aix-la-Chapelle. Hence the journey by rail to Louvain, and the walk to

Aerschot. Louvain is a station on the long and tedious line from Antwerp to Aix-la-Chapelle, but the writer had not seen its town-hall. Aerschot is one of the minor stations on the newer and more direct railway between Antwerp and Aix-la-Chapelle, known as the Grand Centrale Belge in familiar speech. By it some years ago you could ride from Aix-la-Chapelle to Antwerp for 3*s.*, *ein Thaler*. Now there are no *Thalers*, and the fare is not far from being doubled.

The return ticket named in the first line of the preceding list of fares is for the first-class cabin in the steamer and first class by railway. It is worth mentioning that, finding all the first-class cabins engaged on board the steamer at Harwich, the writer went forward to the second-class cabin, and

found the accommodation so good that, in returning from Antwerp to Harwich, he made for the fore cabin at once, without asking whether there was room among the better places. The second-class return fare to Antwerp being only 24*s.*, 16*s.* may be deducted from the travelling expenses of Excursion No. 2, which brings the cost of the expedition to 5*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* This is scarcely more than has been sketched out for an excursion of much less variety.

A capital eight days' excursion may be made by those who can only allow themselves a week's absence from business, which is also one of the cheapest pieces of travelling that can be named. It is to visit the Rhine by way of Antwerp and Cologne. These are the figures:

	£	s.	d.
London to Antwerp (half return, second, G. E. R.)	0	12	0
Antwerp to Aix-la-Chapelle	0	5	4
Aix-la-Chapelle to Cologne	0	8	0
Cologne to Mainz (half return, 8 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i> = 4 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i>)	0	6	1
Mainz to Cologne (" best cabin, 12 <i>s.</i> 1 <i>d.</i>)	0	6	1
Cologne to Rotterdam (third class, 6 <i>s.</i>)	0	9	1
	£2	1	7

The traveller arrives in Antwerp (as per advertisement in Henschel's *Telegraph*, the only referee at the moment) about ten on Sunday morning. Thence he may ride by a midday train (say 1.30*) to Aix-la-Chapelle, which will occupy about four hours. He must take care, by looking at the time-bills hanging in the vestibule of the *gare* at Antwerp that his ticket is for the line *via* Hasselt and Maestricht. If not, the tourist may be carried to Aix-la-Chapelle, by way of Liège, at a greater expense both of time and money. Aix-la-Chapelle might be the resting-place for the night, next day

* These and other times must be ascertained from the *summer* season time-tables of railways and steamers. This is best done on the spot, and there is no difficulty about it.

taking a forenoon train to Cologne, which is a two hours' ride. On Sundays there is an extra train. After seeing the sights of Cologne, Bonn can easily be reached by rail or steamer in time comfortably to find a lodging. The prospect from the steamer's landing-place at Bonn towards and after sunset is worth a little effort to see, and is a pretty foretaste of the beauties which are in store for the coming day. Taking the steamboat which ascends the river about nine the next morning, the traveller will be moved before a series of pictures which, in their bewildering variety, have almost the effect of walking through the Royal Academy exhibition. St. Goar is a good stopping place for the night, the hotels being on the river's brink. It is reached in

about nine hours from Bonn. In the evening, or next morning early, the tourist would do well to walk up to the Rheinfels, a ruined fortress which immediately overhangs the little town. From St. Goar the passage by steamer to Bingen is a little over two hours. There the traveller may easily while away a day in the most cursory inspection of the beautiful neighbourhood. An expedition to Creuznach, half an hour distant by rail, might occupy the next forenoon, and then let the traveller take the steamer which reaches Andernach that evening. On Friday, by rising early, it will be just possible to have a glimpse of very curious basaltic caves, of a volcanic region, and of a lake which occupies what was once a crater; returning down a beautiful valley which leads to the Rhine at Brohl. If the steamer cannot be joined there, twelve minutes' rail brings the traveller to Andernach again. Joining the steamer about 3 p.m., Düsseldorf is reached at eleven. There the passengers are transferred to another boat, which arrives at Rotterdam about 2 p.m. the next day. The Great Eastern Company's steamer leaves during the summer at six. The railway journey from Cologne to Rotterdam is tedious, and costs 17s. 6d. ordinary second class, or a little over 11s. third class. If the traveller likes best to return by way of Antwerp, he will have to get a bed in Cologne and travel by railway through Aix-la-Chapelle and Maestricht the next day, so as to reach Antwerp in time for the steamer to England. The times of departure of the Great Eastern Company's boats from Antwerp are apt to be changed, according to the time of year. It is therefore worth while to ascertain beforehand. For if the beginning of your week's holiday were in Au-

gust and the end of it in September, trusting to the time-table you had started with might lose you your passage on arrival at the quay at Antwerp. This has been the experience of the writer. Moreover, the train, which, leaving Cologne in the forenoon, enables a traveller to reach Antwerp between two and three o'clock, may be second-class express, not carrying third-class passengers. In that case the scale of price will be materially disturbed.

This is the itinerary according to days:

Sunday: Antwerp and Aix-la-Chapelle are reached.

Monday: Cologne, Bonn.

Tuesday: (Coblentz) St. Goar.

Wednesday: Bingen.

Thursday: Creuznach, Andernach.

Friday: Düsseldorf.

Our last example of an outline tour on the Continent is also the least expensive; but if the traveller is willing to walk, he may get great enjoyment and much change of scene from a tour of little cost, although what is called scenery can scarcely be offered, except on the first day's journey. There is a substantial advantage about this excursion which is in contrast with the experience of more favoured spots. The tourist returns to his labours at home in better condition than if he had been among the mountains of Switzerland or the Tyrol. The air of the Low Countries being not so dissimilar from that of our own island, the change back to the vitiated atmosphere of London is not perceived to an inconvenient extent. It is a fact notorious to medical men that many a patient comes to them who has just enjoyed his holiday among the pure air of elevated districts. His system has become accustomed to it, so that on his return to his usual habits the traveller finds himself 'downright ill,' whereas if he

had stayed at home he might have kept perfectly well.

Steamers leave Fenning's Wharf on the south side of London Bridge two or three times a week for Dunkirk, at hours which must be ascertained from the printed bills issued once a month. Passengers usually arrive at Dunkirk in good time in the morning of the next day, from four o'clock onwards, according to the hour of starting. A return-ticket, which allows a month, costs 15s. first class, and 10s. 6d. second class. The latter is not recommended for ordinary passengers, because there is more smoking in the little cabin than might be favourable to any one who was inclined to be sea-sick. The second-class cabin is greatly used by seamen travelling from one port to another. If it is a fine day a very agreeable 'run down the river' is part of the programme; and when salt water is reached the sails are set, so that a passenger by these little screw-steamers enjoys the 'sensation,' rare to a landsman, of taking passage in a vessel which sails—no mean treat for an ordinary worker indoors. The first day after landing may be given to a leisurely walk towards Cassel (France) through Bergues, a little fortified carilloned town, half a day's journey distance from Dunkirk. Cassel (= *Castrum*) is a village on the top of a hill like that of Harrow, and commands a horizon of some fifty miles' diameter. There are yet traces of the Romans to be seen. Charming roomy accommodation of the simpler sort may be had at the Hôtel de la Mairie close to the town-hall, and astoundingly cheap. Next day a good walk will take the traveller to Ypres, a fine old city, which was once as big as Leeds is now. Ypres is an interesting example of the decayed and reposeful towns of which Belgium and Flanders have

so many. The town-hall is magnificent; and the walk on the ramparts, now converted into gardens, bounded by acres of walks in meadows, where the water-lilies fringe the grim old walls, are well worth seeing. From the romantic and mediæval, another day's journey brings the tourist to Courtrai, a busy prosperous manufacturing city, in constant communication with England. Its feminine population is remarkable for its good looks. Next may be taken Tournai, a considerable fortified town; then Audenarde, familiar in English history; and then Brussels. Probably a day might be spent in Brussels, and another day in visiting the field of Waterloo, walking through the forest of Soignes. From Brussels the traveller may turn his steps to Ghent. Another day might bring him to Bruges, whence a half day's walk will be sufficient for getting to Thourout. Another easy journey will take the tourist to Dixmude, from which a good day's walk of twenty-six miles lands him once more in Dunkirk. If any of the spaces between two places should seem too great to be covered by a day's walk, the distance can be abridged *ad libitum* by taking a few miles' ride on the railway, which is never very far off. The fares are so low that more than sixpence need never be spent in this way, if the traveller makes walking his rule and to ride the exception. As to living, if economy is the object, supper, bed, and breakfast will be obtainable, in more comfortable houses than our tourist would 'use' in his ordinary life at home, for 2s. 6d. or less; and *service* has not to be thought of, because the people themselves wait on you. This accommodation is best sought in minor towns; in cities such as Bruges or Ghent, tariffs are higher, and yet very low,

according to our notions. It is suggested to the traveller to take his *déjeuner* or *dinner* in the larger cities. If he does this the distances might be arranged by map, so as to stay each night in a minor town, reaching the cities named in the itinerary given above after a morning's walk.

Before quitting the subject of outline tours one may glance for a few moments at what steamboats will do for the traveller, without quitting English territory. Ireland may be visited by means of the British and Irish Company's steamers from the Port of London, which give a voyage of seventy-six hours at an expense of 34*s.* first class, or 25*s.* second class, for return-tickets which allow two months. Dundee steamers avail for mid Scotland; return-tickets (which allow three months) are 50*s.* first class, including provisions, or 20*s.* second class. Edinburgh and the Scottish Border are within the tourist's reach by means of two services of steamers between the Port of London and Leith or Granton Pier. The London and Edinburgh Shipping Company's steamers leave twice a week, return-tickets, available for a month, 34*s.* first class, 24*s.* 6*d.* second class. The General Steam Navigation Company's vessels also sail for Edinburgh from Irongate and St. Katherine's Wharf, near the Tower, every Wednesday and Saturday, single fares, 22*s.* or 16*s.*; return-tickets, available for one month, 34*s.* or

24*s.* 6*d.* The Hull steamboats of the General Steam Navigation Company leave London on Wednesdays and Saturdays, giving a month's holiday in Yorkshire or Lincolnshire for an incredibly small sum. Every Saturday there is a steamer from London towards Liverpool, which calls at Plymouth and Falmouth. By it Lancashire and the Lake district of Cumberland are inexpensively approached; while those who prefer the beauties of Devonshire and Cornwall are carried to them; in each case deriving the benefit of a sea-voyage into the bargain, instead of a stuffy excursion train.

The Tyne Shipping Company also sends vessels twice a week from New Dundee Wharf to Newcastle. The passage is about thirty hours.

Hampshire and the New Forest are accessible by the Cork steamers which leave London on Thursdays, calling at Southampton. By them also Devonshire and Cornwall can be reached, as Plymouth is one of the stations.

Another way to Hampshire is by the British and Irish Steam-packet Company's vessels, which call at Portsmouth. Return-tickets, allowing two months, cost 15*s.* first class, or 10*s.* second class. Lastly, one of the pleasantest excursions out of London is by the General Steam Navigation Company's paddle-steamer from London Bridge to Yarmouth, a twelve hours' sail.

A STORY OF THE BIARRITZ SEASON.

THE summer season at Biarritz, as so many of my readers know, begins on the 10th of July. Biarritz has attained the grand and remunerative ambition of a watering-place—that of being in season all the year round. It has a distinct summer and winter season. In the winter the little town is like an English village. There is a regular English colony, with its parish church, its shops, its club, its promenade. The carriages of many peers and commoners roll through the lanes, as they might through the suburbs of London or Paris. The English and Americans entirely dominate and possess the place. Then, as the weather warms, they fall off, but never entirely so. There is always the great Atlantic and the fresh upland breezes. The big houses are shut up, but some residents stay on, and there is a constant stream of tourists and invalids on their way to the Pyrenean watering-places. On the 10th of July the formal summer season begins. A few days previously, the place is comparatively empty. A few days after, it is comparatively full. A week or two later, and the place is crowded, and prices are trebled, quadrupled, quintupled. Last year, as soon as the season began, the place grew brilliant. The presentation of the national flags on the 14th of July threw a wave of excitement into every municipality of France. That presentation of flags heralded that renewed spirit of military aggrandisement that has led on to the appropriation of Tunis. On

the first evening of the season the square was thronged with promenaders and listeners. The English, Americans, and Russians were going, or thinking about going; but the French were pouring in from Paris and the departments, and the Spaniards were crossing the frontiers. The finest houses of Biarritz belong to some Spanish-American people, who have made their fortunes in South America and spend a part of the year here.

I sometimes wonder why they have come from Spain, which has a Biarritz of its own in St. Sebastian. I had the idea that some of them were better known in Spain than in France. I had come from St. Sebastian myself, a much finer place, in the heart of the tumbled Asturian Sierras and close to the dividing heights of the Pyrenees, with bold coasts and headlands, broad inland reaches of tidal water, picturesque villages, splendid river scenery. It is all a matter of fashion. Fashionable people love to congregate themselves within exact limits, an area within which everything can be inspected. I will certainly say for Biarritz that I have never seen more exquisite and beautiful toilettes; and I entirely share the opinion that 'beauty should go beautifully drest.' Biarritz, in its summer season, always wears the gay and splendid costumes of a *fête champêtre*. No wonder that the French prefer to every other their own watering-place with their own ways. The Englishman likes rough comfort and free-

dom from toilet duties; but the Frenchman is all the same at the coast as if about to consume his absinthe—which also consumes him—on the Boulevard des Italiens. The differences are seen in those of the Royal and Imperial families. Our own gracious Queen loves retirement, and seeks it in the woods and glens and secluded shores of Osborne. But here at Biarritz the Villa Eugénie is overlooked on every side, and the whole life of the Empress in the happy days when she used to stay here was lived in public.

A very good book to carry about one and read in the retired coves is Gleig's *Subaltern*, the youthful work of the gentleman who became the biographer of Wellington and the Chaplain-General of the Forces. It is curious, as we turn away from the Grand Casino and the promenade, to look at his account of Biarritz at the time when the Peninsular army passed into France. He even thinks it necessary to inform his readers that 'the little town of Biarritz stands upon the seashore.' 'It was, and no doubt is now,' he goes on to say, 'a remarkably pretty village, about as large, perhaps, as Sandgate, and built upon the very margin of the water; and, above all, it was, and I trust still is, distinguished as the residence of two or three handsome females.' It became my lot in life to verify the observation of this distinguished writer, only instead of two or three handsome females one might speak of two or three hundred, or, in the height of the season, of two or three thousands. Mr. Gleig's young ladies might, however, have been the grandmothers of some of those whom I saw last season, one of whom stands, and for ever will remain, supreme in my memory.

The scene of my little story—such as I have to tell—is laid almost immediately beneath that Imperial villa: a certain exciting incident of this season, which, as will afterwards be seen, led to very important practical results. In my own history that villa will always be a cynosure and landmark. Let me say that, in spite of the flags, the public feeling at Biarritz is distinctly Imperialistic. They could not judge Manlius within sight of the Capitol, and they cannot forget the gracious and beautiful Empress within sight of her villa. Still it is a very plain one, by no means so sumptuous as those of the Spanish-Americans to whom I have referred. It is her own still—at least, till the other day; but it is all lonely and deserted, save for those in charge of it. The *intendant* who looks after it was pointed out to me—a fine old soldier maimed in the wars. Just below the villa are the big baths, where you attire yourselves for the big billows of the Bay of Biscay, which even on the calmest day roll in vast and grand, and with a power that is overwhelming to those unaccustomed to their onset.

My visit to Biarritz was a chance one, or what we poor mortals choose to call chance. I had been staying well content at Bayonne, pleased with the arcaded streets, the old and new cathedral, the river Adour, and all the associations of the Wellington *Despatches* and Napier's *History*. Considering myself well off, I did not care to be better off, but that irresistible tide of fashion drew me to the gay watering-place. I went the six miles by the new local railway from the pretty little station, the mention of which is unaccountably omitted by *Murray*, and is hereby commended to its

editor. The very first day that I was there, about half-past six in the evening, I met—not an uncommon circumstance for men between twenty and thirty—I met my Fate.

She was a bright and brilliant girl, but as I do not intend to identify her, I will only ask you to draw the portrait of your own Fate, and suppose that mine is very much after her style, only handsomer. I had gone to dine at a big *table d'hôte*, having secured my place in an early part of the day. During the day I explored the place, and, indeed, there is not so much of it but its exploration is effectively done within a few hours. There was the light-house to be visited, and the casino to be done, and the main winding street to be shopped in, the bathing-places looked at, and the path above the cliff and the path below the cliff to be promenaded, and what I think the most picturesque bit of Biarritz—the old port where at one time the whalers used to come in from the southern seas—not to mention that I had to contemplate the curious mingling of ladies and gentlemen swimming, or learning to swim, and conversing and flirting at the same time. Then I got back to the *table d'hôte*, where during soup and fish I gazed in speculative mood on the two or three empty chairs nearest to me. Then three persons entered the room, evidently father, mother, and daughter. I made quite sure that, with my usual ill-luck, the parent-birds would come next to me, and that the young lady would prove the last of the quartette. But to my great content it so happened that the young lady was seated next to me. She had the divine gift of graciousness, gave back query and comment, and, seeing that I was a stranger, tried to make me understand the place and the people.

She spoke of the big houses, and regretted that some of them were only open for two or three months in the year.

I told her of various great houses I had seen.

'Yes,' she said, 'those best houses, belonging to the little Spanish colony, are only open for about two months; and such fine gardens! It almost seems a pity that there should be a waste of space at the time when Biarritz is so crowded.'

Then she asked me if I had seen the English houses.

'Yes, they have been pointed out to me,' I answered—'such as the Duke of Abercorn's, and Lord Hampton's, and Lord Aylesbury's.'

'O, there are a number of them. In the season we get visits from some of your most famous public men. Lord Salisbury, after the last General Election, stayed here for a time; and one Sunday lately, when I was at our nice new church, to my great surprise the Archbishop of Canterbury was there, and gave us the blessing.'

Then we talked of the country around Biarritz—how English-like it was; how the desolate Landes country between here and Bordeaux, where the poor people used to walk on stilts, had been reclaimed by the pine-woods, and had now the neatest and most picturesque station on the Ligne de Midi.

'But O, those Spanish mountains across the Bay! Of course they are not so grand as the Pyrenees; but we get such a lovely view of them from here, and they seem quite to have seized my imagination.'

'I was among them in the winter,' I replied, 'but it was so mild that there really was no winter. I used to shoot woodcock in the valleys, and the police used to make me turn out my bag and pay

a tax on every woodcock I had shot.'

The worst of this *table-d'hôte* intercourse is its thoroughly transitory nature. You meet as ships at sea, and the chances are that you never meet again. It was with a feeling of the thoroughly unsatisfactory nature of such acquaintanceship that I surveyed the Luxmores—such I had ascertained to be the name—give a civil bow, and retire to their own apartments.

But she was my Fate. I felt it strongly at the time, and I have never lost the impression. I seemed to tread on air as that night I took my lonely walk by the moonlit sea, hearing the music crash afar off, and the indistinguishable murmur of the crowd. All night long I was 'reading her perfect features in the gloom,' as one of Mr. Tennyson's lovers did under very similar circumstances. The acquaintance was to be deepened next day in a curious and remarkable manner,—and never to cease.

In all my travels I have the good or bad taste to adhere to the English hours of feeding—that is to say, that I have a solid English breakfast at nine, and lunch at half-past one. The result is that I am quite free during the time that people are taking their *déjeuner*. I resolved to devote the period between noon and lunch-time to bathing. Everybody had gone in to feed, and I perceived that I had this part of the Bay of Biscay entirely to myself. No doubt the bathing at Biarritz is admirable. I know of none better. There are grand sands, firm, hard, broad, like a marble pavement. But even here there are drawbacks which require precaution. For instance, in a remarkably safe cove, where a rope is hung across the chasm, a

man I know was carried out to sea on a rapidly-shifting quicksand. On the *plage* here there is, perhaps, no such danger; but still there are cross-currents, and when all is peaceful and sunshiny on the shore there may be a mighty storm raging a thousand miles away on the Atlantic, and sending from afar huge sudden waves.

To speak mildly, I am not a very good swimmer; to speak severely, I am an execrably bad one. Then, in the excitement of the bathing, I am apt to go out further than either my strength or my science warrants. I had hardly calculated the force of those heavy rollers from the ocean. When I had wrestled with them for a time a feeling of fatigue came over me. Perhaps I was rather faint from the want of that lunch which was now rapidly becoming due. But there was a further peril, of which I was utterly unaware, and of which I ought to have been warned at the big baths where I had assumed my aquatic attire. They have coloured flags, indeed, to indicate safety or danger; but these are of no use to the uninitiated. Though the tide was coming in there was a strong current, which might rapidly take me out to sea. By the time that I had stayed in the water for an injudiciously long time, I felt the force of this current. At first I thought nothing of it; but presently I found, with some alarm, that I had not strength to resist it. The next quarter of an hour was one of the most unhappy that ever belonged to that division of time. I felt myself drifting away unresistingly into the ocean. There was not a single fishing-boat in sight. Afar I saw the lighthouse on the hill; and afar the summit of the Eugénie villa beneath it, looking, as I thought, my last look at earth and sky. Then I closed

my eyes ; and although I cannot say that all the events of my past life rushed through my mind in a moment of time, as I am told has been the case with other people of drowning experience ; yet I did think that my life had been poorly spent, and I only wished it had been worthier.

'I have lived my life, and that which I
have done

Do thou within thyself make pure.'

But just at this moment a pair of magnificent sapphire eyes met mine, a beautiful white hand clasped mine. Was it Flying Zeo of the Coming Race, or Naiad of the Ocean, or Angel from heaven ? It was Ethel Luxmore, who had been bathing with some young ladies, and had observed me swimming out in the direction where she knew there was this current. She had endeavoured to signal

me, but I had not observed ; and had called out, but of course I had not heard her voice in the dash of the waves. Then the kind-hearted courageous girl swam out and seized my hand, just as I was about to sink through exhaustion. With very little difficulty she piloted me out of the current, and soon my feet touched the firm sands.

How wonderful is the generous heart of woman ! I wished to offer her the life which she had saved—a poor unworthy one, indeed, and which I could hardly hope that she would accept. But the very fact that she had saved my life gave her an interest in it, made her at last willing that she should adore and bless it. To use Coleridge's strain :

'And so I won my Genevieve,
My bright and beauteous bride.'

HOW WE USE MUMMIES.

'STEP behind here a moment, sir ?' said my friend, the artists' colour-man ; 'you might like to look at this.'

And there, in the little room behind the shop, on the table, lay a complete mummy in perfect preservation, down to the gaudy burial-cloths wrapped round him ; only a portion of the right leg was wanting.

'So you do a little business in curiosities,' I said to him.

'Well, no, sir, not exactly ; not but what he's a curiosity, and a fine one too. Why, Mr. —, you know—him that paints the Egyptian pictures—he was here looking

him over, and he says he can tell by the clothes and the writin' how he was some big swell—a high-priest, I think he said, or maybe a king.'

'But did you pick him up a bargain, then ? I suppose he's for sale ?'

'No, sir—that is, he's for sale and he's not for sale ; we uses them in the trade.'

'Use them ! what do you mean ?'

'Well, I'll tell you, sir. You know the brown colour called mummy, I've often sold it you ; well, that's what it's made of.'

'What, out of the cloth and fibres ?'

'No, sir, out of the body of him. You see his face there; well, that's about the tone; we break him up as we want him. I've ground up his right leg already; he's all good, head and all.'

'Ground him up! Good heavens, good heavens! You grind up dead men to make paint with!'

'Well, it ain't like a dead man quite, you see, sir; he's been like that three or four thousand years, maybe; mostly spice, I reckon; and it's a fine solid colour they make. We has a lot of 'em over, about seven pounds they cost us mostly, delivered in the Borough.'

Then came a shrill cry of 'Wanted in the shop!' and this vendor of human pigments returned to his counter.

Could it be true that this portly, white-aproned product of civilisation was about, nay, had actually begun, to desecrate this miracle of time, this gaudily-attired, blackened human shape that had endured four thousand years to be the monument of the spirit which it once contained, a life that had been a great one in a great nation, a ruler among men, perhaps an interpreter of the gods?

Was he one of that great company of priests, bound together in the practice of mysterious rites and the monopoly of human knowledge, those mathematicians and astronomers of the ancient world, who combined with the highest

wisdom then attained the superstition of the strangest faiths,—who on the moonless nights at Sais commemorated the sufferings of Osiris, that god whose name the old historian dared not mention, who overcame the spirit of evil, and died for the triumph of the good?

Standing before this blackened clay with the hard straight features, the thin lips and long sunken eyes, how it all rushes back on the memory!—that tale of Horus, the last of the sons of heaven who sat on an earthly throne, and Mem, the first of the human dynasty; the legend of the ibis and the phoenix bird, of Sesostris the mighty conqueror, and Mycerinus, who made six years into twelve. What profit that you had the rich man's funeral, that they washed your body in the palm-oil, filled it with myrrh and cassia, and laid it in the nitre the full tale of seventy days? What profit that so many tides of war, from Cleopatra to the Pyramids, have passed and left you sleeping; faiths changed and empires passed away, but you outlasted them? Was your life too prosperous that such a Nemesis should come upon you after all these years? For now you lie in the barbarian's back parlour, to be ground to powder and made up in tubes and sold for sixpence! Such is the irony of Fate.

THE LAND OF 'THE PIRATE.'

An Angling Holiday in Shetland.

BUT is Shetland really worth going to see? Over and over again, as the returning summer calls up holiday dreams and plans, is this question put to any one supposed to be capable of giving the least information on the subject. Or at other times the query may take the form of: 'I am thinking of running up as far as Shetland this season; is it worth while to take a rod with me?' As regards the latter question, we will consider presently the prospect of combining a little quiet sport with your Northern trip, merely remarking here that very much depends upon what you expect, as one man manages to get a good deal and is pleased, where another gets next to nothing and grumbles. But as to the first question, whether Shetland is worth going to see—most certainly it is, if only for the purpose of visiting one of the quaintest and quietest parts in all Great Britain, and a country that Sir Walter Scott, with all his intimate acquaintance with the different localities, and wealth of varied material to be found throughout Scotland, considered worthy to be selected as the scene of one of the most popular of all his beautiful romances.

Every week throughout the summer months two steamers leave Granton for Shetland. One starts on the Tuesday morning, and arrives at Lerwick on Wednesday evening; the other starts on Friday morning, and arrives on Saturday evening. The boats are advertised to start at various hours from before breakfast to nearly

midday, according to the state of the tide. They are generally pretty full at Granton, being largely patronised by people going just as far as Aberdeen; for they only take eight hours or so to get there, which is much about the same time that the train does, while, of course, the expense is less. Besides that, the sail from Granton to Aberdeen is a very charming one on a fine summer day, and undoubtedly more pleasant and lively than what the old salt termed 'daudlin' along in they blanked trains.' Out from Granton Harbour you pass Inchkeith, the Isle of May, and the little red-tiled villages on the coast of Fife; then past the coasts of Forfar and Kincardine, you come to Aberdeen. Here you always stay for two or three hours, and this time cannot well be better employed than by dining at one of the numerous and good hotels with which Aberdeen is stocked. And, after all, you may be a very good sailor, but a dinner on shore is better than a dinner on board, unless under extremely exceptional circumstances. Starting thus fortified from Aberdeen, you smoke round the warm funnel till the spirit moves you to turn into your berth. The chief deterring elements to a quiet night are when gentlemen of the cattle-droving and similar persuasions meet together on board in any quantities, and over the native white wine of the country discuss, with language emphatic, the respective qualities of various men and beasts. This, and a stoppage at Wick in the middle of the night,

when there is, at times, a considerable amount of banging and thumping about overhead on deck, are the only things that need thus far render life the least of a burden to even the most sensitive of mortals. If fine, you are not likely to be late in coming on deck next morning, and getting the first glimpse of the Orkney Isles. The grand rock scenery, the wild cliffs rising straight up from the sea, the myriads of sea-fowl, the divers and cormorants in all directions on the water, the sea-breeze that always seems to blow so fresh up here, and presently the bay of Kirkwall sparkling in the sunshine of a summer morning, little white sails scudding about here and there, and the rougher and more dingy-looking fishing-boats making slowly for the harbour, all combine to complete a scene lifelike and characteristic of a hardy island race, whose work and play alike are found on the sea.

'His young eyes opening on the ocean
foam

Had from that moment deemed the deep
his home.'

Here you can devote your time on shore to visiting St. Magnus' Cathedral and the old ruins of the Earl's Palace. These are well worth more than merely a passing visit; however, as we could not do justice to them here, it would not be satisfactory to dwell as briefly as we should be compelled to do on these monuments of by-gone Orcadian grandeur. Guide-books, not to mention guides innumerable, will easily be found to give all, and possibly more than all, you want to know about them. For the rest, there is not very much else to be seen in Kirkwall, which is a pretty, quiet, clean-looking little town, swept alternately by soft winds and boisterous gales off the cold North Sea.

In about a couple of hours or

so, the steamer bell gives you plenty of notice that it is time to be once more on your way to the Shetland Isles. You have now about eight and a half hours' sailing before you reach Lerwick, so can now look round and contemplate those who are to be your fellow-passengers for the time. About the same in number, probably, as when you went into Kirkwall, a good number going no farther; but in turn you have picked up others, who have been either waiting at Kirkwall since the last steamer, or have crossed the Pentland Firth from the mainland, and so on by Stromness. There are English and Scotch tourists, sometimes a stray foreigner or so, Oxford and Cambridge undergraduates, anglers of various sorts and descriptions, some returning to well-known and favourite haunts, others going up for the first time 'on spec'; tourist clergymen, sometimes a good many ladies, and, of course, it goes without saying, the usual complement of commercial gentlemen. Most people would wonder how on earth it pays these gentry to go in such numbers up to Shetland and throughout its northern isles; and, as a matter of fact, it does not, as one candidly admitted to me. But then it keeps any one else off that beat, which, doubtless, is a matter of intense satisfaction in these days of close competition. Half-way between Orkney and Shetland you pass the Fair Isle. This is chiefly historical as the scene of the shipwreck of part of the Duke of Medina Sidonia's fleet in 1588; and to this day it retains traces of the visit of its Spanish guests, in the peculiar pattern and colour of what is known as Fair Isle hosiery, which constitutes its chief special industry. The crew are said to have remained there against the wishes of the inhabitants; if so,

the Fair Islander of the sixteenth century must have been a different sort of person from his descendants of to-day, who are conspicuous among other virtues for their simple-minded kindness and hospitality. But even as late as two centuries after that there existed a very marked feeling against the saving of drowning men, originally induced either by the wish that there should be no survivor to tell tales or interfere with their right of wreckage, or possibly the prudent one of not increasing the number of mouths, already probably amply sufficient for their scanty supply of meal. At least these are the reasons suggested, and doubtless correctly so, by the author in his notes to the *Pirate*. And there is no cause to doubt but that the Fair Islanders were as good honest wreckers, when they got the chance, as the inhabitants of the rest of those northern isles, or that they less devoutly uttered the kindly prayer for 'mair wrecks ere winter.' A story is there given which fairly illustrates the spirit in which such a business was regarded.

After the commissioners had placed lighthouses on the Isle of Sanda and the Pentland Skerries, a gentleman expressed surprise at seeing the farmer of one of these isles in a boat with a very bad pair of sails. 'Had it been His will,' said the man, 'that light had not been placed yonder, I would have had enough of new sails last winter.' An affected deference to Providence so inconsistent with the sentiment of the speech, which may perhaps find its parallel in more recent times in the pious telegrams of a certain warlike Emperor. Not very often, alas, is the crew saved of a vessel wrecked upon the Fair Isle; and many a one never heard of again has been dashed to pieces in the dark

against the pitiless rocks that rise straight up from the middle of the sea. There was a talk a year or two ago of attempting to mitigate the dangers that arose from its peculiar position, by erecting a lighthouse on some conspicuous spot on the island. To-day, perhaps, it looks innocent enough, with the sun glinting on its little houses, and lighting up its green fields and gray rocks, while from the only spot where a boat can land on the island one puts off as the steamer approaches, sharp at both ends and looking anything but seaworthy—indeed, a mere cockleshell of a thing as it tosses on the swell, though the very reverse is said actually to be the case. As may be supposed, there are not many passengers to land or pick up here; a stray visitor with more than the usual amount of energy in getting into out-of-the-way places, and a few times in the year a clergyman who makes his way there to perform any marriages and baptisms that may be required. On the Sunday the resident schoolmaster, I understand, conducts the ordinary services. Altogether it can scarcely be called a gay place, and most people would probably think not specially attractive. But passengers or not, there is one thing that is never forgotten, and that is to collect all the newspapers on board that can be got, tie them up in a bundle, and pitch them over to the boat that puts off from the shore. The Fair Islanders love news as well as their neighbours who live in the busy world, and these papers are highly appreciated by them, and go the round of the various houses.

A few hours later and you are in sight of Sumburgh Head, and soon afterwards are pitching in the 'roost,' where, owing to the furious tide that runs there, you may usually reckon on a little bit of a

sea; but you are soon through and on past the lighthouse on Bressay, a large island opposite the town of Lerwick, which forms a harbour sufficient for all the requirements of the place, though sometimes it is pretty crowded, as for instance in June, when the Dutch vessels are in, s'opping for a day or two on their way to their fishing-grounds; and the revenue cutter, a stray yacht, possibly the *Pharos*, the lordly one belonging to the Commissioners of the Northern Lights. The Dutch vessels are objects of no small interest to others besides the crew of the revenue cutter, as they always have quantities of spirits on board (at least on their way to the fishing), which cannot be taken ashore, though for the matter of that some is occasionally landed despite the revenue cutter and all. But a large quantity is consumed on board the vessels by people who go off from the shore with fowls, eggs, and suchlike commodities to exchange for it, and extremely cheap they get it. This, and the fact that it is never really dark in the month of June during the whole twenty-four hours, induced the Irish sailor who had found his way up there, and was seen coming ashore at midnight with tottering and unsteady gait, to enthusiastically hiccup, 'Och, shure I've got to Paradoise at last—daylight all noight, and dhrunk for tuppence!'

The town of Lerwick is utterly unlike anything but itself—a quaint, old-fashioned, irregular little town, the principal street paved all across, and at places so narrow that when a cart or 'machine' of any kind comes along it, the folks there have to step into the doorway at places to let it pass. The town was built before such traces of civilisation as wheeled conveyances existed, and when the best in the country were contented to travel

in the manner Mrs. Baby Yellowley and her companions made their way to the hospitable old Udaller's mansion a century and a half ago. Boats were the more natural and appropriate carriages for that part of the country, and many of the old houses in Lerwick are built right down to the water, doubtless a great convenience in those good old days, before smuggling was fondly supposed to have become utterly extinct. At one end of the town is Fort Charlotte, where, in the winter-time, large numbers of the Naval Reserve are drilled. The interior is most interesting, particularly to a person who has never seen anything of the kind before, part being got up after the fashion of a man-of-war, with Armstrong and other guns and their appropriate shells, some cut up into sections, so that you can see the working and construction of each. The place, however, is rather more imposing in appearance than I fancy it would be in reality were its services ever to be called into requisition, as I believe that if any of the large guns there were to be fired off, the first thing that they would bring down would be the fort itself. There are, fortunately, not many 'lions' to be done in Shetland, which is one of its chief charms, as then you can move about and do pretty much as your tastes direct. The chief ones are the island of Noss, the Orkneyman's Cave, and Scalloway Castle. The two former not only can, but must, be combined with a sail on a fine day, while the latter certainly should not be missed. Scalloway is a little village with an old ruined castle of the days of Earl Patrick Stewart. It is six miles off Lerwick, and is made a most common Sabbath-day's journey by those who, when in the country, like a walk on that as well as the other six days of the week.

From Lerwick a little steamer runs twice a week up through the isles as far as Unst, the most northern of them all. This is a very fine sail, and can be combined with fair sport at some of the places where the steamer stops at, and where accommodation—the angler's difficulty in most parts of Shetland—can be obtained. I have not, however, fished these myself, so cannot speak as to that; but I intend, after a few remarks about the sport to be met with near Lerwick, to direct the angler to a place where I have fished a good deal, and where, from my own experience, I think that it will be his own fault if he does not get sport more or less good, according to the luck he may have in hitting off the right season, weather, and time. First, then, as to Lerwick. For any person who cares about sea-fishing there cannot well be found a much better place for it than the bay opposite the town. I have myself, in an energetic, if slightly erratic, manner, practised sailing about the bay there on a fine day, crossed over and seen through the well-kept lighthouse on Bressay, and on the way home with my boatman caught several dozen haddock and whiting in a very short time.

There are also some large coal-fish about there, which are occasionally caught on the handline; but which are, I believe, more readily taken, and afford, of course, far better sport to those who understand the use of a spinning bait for them, and have the proper tackle. There is excellent rod-fishing round about Lerwick, but I doubt much whether it is easily accessible to the stray angler, as there has been, and not one bit too soon, an angling club established there. I believe that there was some talk about issuing tickets to tourists on certain terms, but I do

not know exactly what conclusion was come to as regards that. The best bit of fishing in that district is Loch Strand, a small loch about five miles from Lerwick, close to and communicating with the sea. Even of this there is only a small bit that is really fishable, but that, I believe, is just about as good a little bit as the ordinary sea-trout angler could well wish to cast a line upon, particularly towards the end of the season. There are also some lochs that afford very good brown-trout fishing about here, the best probably being Asta and Tingwall; both are preserved, but the minister at Tingwall has right over the latter, and is exceptionally kind in granting leave to fish it, and in giving the use of a boat that he has upon it. These are better, however, early in the season, say June or July, than later on, when the weeds spring up more and the trout seem to 'go off' the fly a little. I have taken some very fine ones out of both of these lochs; and on a fine day a good fisher should get a basket of trout running from half a pound to two pounds and upwards in weight, which would compare favourably with those out of most Scottish lochs.

But let us leave Lerwick, and for a fishing-trip try some place further afield. Straight across the mainland to the west is a little village called Walls. Except by anglers who are acquainted with its merits, few anglers visit it, as it is decidedly out of the way and leads to nowhere in particular, unless, indeed, the island of Foula, more than twenty miles off the west coast of Shetland, be the object of a visit; and some adventurous tourists, including ladies, do make their way over to that out-of-the-way isle. But if you intend to do so, you had better select settled weather for your

trip, or you may be detained there longer than you either intended or care for; so that, unless very early in the season, you will probably content yourself with a distant view of its rugged peaks from the mainland. It does not, however, require any extra inducement to make a visit to Walls repay the time and trouble, especially to an angler who goes there at the right season. It is about twenty-six miles off Lerwick, and the road, it must be admitted, winding, as it does, round the head of numerous long voes, which make it about half a dozen times as long as it ought to be, would be certainly not a little tedious were it not for the changing character of its scenery. Here the clear bold outline of some fine point of coast scenery, with its gray rocks stretching out into the blue sea; there a still inland loch, and little cottage giving out a fragrant whiff from the smoking peats; while dotted about here and there are the small 'Plantie Cruives,' within the stone walls of which the poor Shetlander raises his scanty crop of vegetables despite the withering sea-blast. Half-way between Lerwick and Walls you come to Airr House Inn, where you put up and lunch, in front of which there is a long voe, in which I have seen more sea-trout jumping than I ever saw anywhere else at one time; and in Shetland the great fishing is in the voes or narrow tongues of the sea running up the land to where a burn falls in. From here there is a capital road all the way to Walls, when there arises the question of accommodation. There is not much doubt about getting put up, as there are a good many places where they take in visitors, but some of them are just a little rough. Far away above all others stands Greenland Farm, kept by the Smiths, and more comfortable

quarters could not well be desired, combined as they are with good cooking, the latter, I regret to say, by no means the *forte* of your average house of call in Shetland. It is about a mile out of the village of Walls, and the road to it—if, indeed, it can be called a road at all—is not much to boast of; but as you can easily get your traps taken up, that is not much of a disadvantage. The next thing to do is to secure a proper guide and boatman. The best man is John Fraser, who both knows the country and the lochs, and is one of the best boatmen I have been often out with. Having a good boatman just makes the difference between getting good sport and getting little or none. Most of these worthies go splashing through the very bits of the bay they ought to keep out of, and let the boat drift over the very spot where your fly ought to be at the minute. But now, where to go? To begin with, at all events for the sea-trout, you must be able to walk, as the best places are some distance off the nearest accommodation. The time of the season of course makes all the difference as to what sort of angling is the best to go in for; but from 1st June to October there are few days when you cannot get some sport, and on some red-letter days very fair sport. Up to the middle of August there are not so many sea-trout moving, but up till then the brown-trout fishing is at its very best. It is not very easy to go wrong there, as there is all round Walls a chain of large lochs communicating one with the other, and all swarming with brown trout.

A few years ago there was a petition got up to some of the proprietors, begging them to preserve the angling and charge a price to anglers for leave to fish; but it came to nothing, and hap-

pily so, I think, though I must admit I was persuaded at the time to sign it; so much for signatures to petitions. It might have benefited some few; but it was feared that it might possibly deter the stray angler from coming into the district and bringing money into it, which is much needed, as though the poorer people in the country are not in want, and probably live better than those of their class in many other places, still they have been from time immemorial accustomed to deal so much in kind, that money is not as plentiful as could be wished as yet. And as a question affecting the numerous lochs stretched in every direction, if it were not for the stray angler they would never be looked at, and over this extent of angling water not a line be cast from one year's end to another. I now propose just to give a word of advice as to the rods and tackle to be taken, and then mention a few of the lochs and voes and the sport likely to be got in them. You must certainly have a couple of rods, in case of any accident, and a little difference between them is an advantage rather than otherwise—say a single-handed rod under twelve feet and a light fifteen-foot sea-trout rod; and as long as they stand you have all you need in that way, of course using nothing but fly.

And now as to that much-vexed question—how many different kinds, and how many books filled with these same different flies, is one to take? My experience has been that the Shetland trout, whether sea or brown, if he is in the humour to take at all, is by no means of a haughty disposition. If he is going to rise to anything, he will probably rise to the fly in front of his nose: unless of course it be something too startling and beyond the bounds of reason alto-

gether in the matter of size, the colour does not signify half as much. All sorts of flies are often recommended, and enthusiastic anglers here, as elsewhere, who have been fortunate enough to kill a good basket of fish, or even perhaps one good fish, upon a fly of a particular pattern, swear by that as the right thing discovered at last, though probably some fly very opposite in colour would have even on that particular occasion succeeded equally well. Now, what I recommend is this—a few dozen of our tried, true, and trusty old friends, the red- and - black hackles of different sizes, from the ordinary small loch size up to a good large sea-trout size, and some dressed with silver-and-gold twist. These flies always come in useful, and no fly-book should ever be without a good stock of them. I would also have a few winged flies, dressed with a silver body and scarlet tip, as they sometimes do very well in the voes, the sea-trout taking them for the fry of fish, I have little doubt, rather than for anything else alive or dead.

Any one just keeping throughout to these flies would, I am perfectly convinced, save himself a vast amount of trouble, and have every particle as good a chance of sport as the angler who was provided with different flies to suit every change in the wind and sky.

And then as to where to fish. Of course some lochs are better for brown and some for sea trout, though, as a matter of fact, there are few that are merely brown-trout lochs, as they are all so connected one with the other by small burns, which the sea-trout push up through with such persistency in a spate that there is a chance of finding them anywhere. But there are two or three which are perhaps about the best for brown trout, and where sea-trout are not likely

to be caught, at all events till very late indeed in the season—Burga Water, Longa Water, and the Mousafirth lochs. These constitute a chain of several large lochs, each of which affords fishing for any number of rods. I do not fancy that there is really much to choose between them, but some think that the latter are the best. After the middle of August the sea-trout begin to come more prominently upon the scene, according to whether it is a wet or dry season; and as you will get many more brown trout than you want when fishing for these, except for some special reason, you will probably devote yourself to lochs frequented by the sea-trout, and it is to a few of the principal of these that I purpose directing attention.

Five miles straight across the hills from Walls is a loch called Killister, and such a five miles, straight across the roughest part of the moor! The loch is something of an oval shape, perhaps nearly a mile long, and as it fishes very fairly from either side, the direction of the wind is not of absolute importance. One end of it is within about twenty yards of the sea at high water, and a small burn runs between the loch and the sea, through which the sea-trout get up into the loch. In a dry season this burn gets very low, and the sea casts up a regular bank of shingle at the mouth, so that nothing can get up it. But when a spate comes, then the burn fills from the loch and bursts away the stones at the mouth, so that the fish get a fair run up. It will thus be seen that for fresh run sea-trout it is not always to be relied upon; but I have both killed, and seen killed in it, a good many, and some fine ones, too. It is, however, at all times a capital loch for brown trout; so much so, that they become rather a nuisance

when you are fishing for sea-trout: but they possess one advantage over those of most other lochs; that is, they are of very superior quality from a gastronomical point of view, a great part of them cutting up quite pink. Starting again in another direction from Walls, after a walk of a little more than a mile, the angler will arrive at what is known as the Bridge of Walls, where the road crosses the voe by a bridge, practically forming a small salt-water loch, which the tide rushes through the bridge into and from as it ebbs and flows. At the head of this loch is a farm, where they keep some boats for hire.

The sea-trout fishing here is a little precarious, being sometimes very good indeed, while at other times it seems next to impossible to get a rise from even the smallest fish, who are generally ready enough, and that when the day apparently leaves nothing to be desired. Even perseverance, which seldom goes wholly unrewarded in angling, cannot do much when the fish refuse to rise, or to touch the fly if by any chance they do. As an instance of this, on one of these bad evenings last season I was fishing this place, and could move nothing,—not a sea-trout would stir; till off a point of weed I put up a fish, but it never attempted to touch the fly. At the second cast the fish rose again, and again refused to touch the fly; a third cast, and exactly the same thing happened; but this time I struck at him pretty smartly, and sent the fly, a small red hackle, into the outside of the gill. I was fishing with a little single-handed rod and fine tackle, as there was no breeze at the time to speak of, and my friend ran out about forty yards of line before I could stop him, springing out of the water, dashing through the weed, and generally doing 'all he

knew' for the next ten minutes, when he came into the net a good three-pound fish, just fresh up from the sea; indeed, he was not out of it there. A couple of days before, off that very same spot, I had killed one much the same, which weighed three and a quarter pounds. I am inclined to think that this is a pretty good sea-trout for Shetland, as, though I have often seen bigger fish, they have almost invariably been bull-trout (*salmo eriox*). These run pretty large, and are numerous towards the end of September and October. The majority of anglers do not trouble themselves much about the difference between the two. To them a trout that comes from the sea must, it stands to common sense, be a sea-trout. The difference between the bull-trout and the sea-trout, it need scarcely be remarked, is nowhere more conspicuous than on the table. Into this salt-water loch, as I have called it, a burn falls (off the mouth of which is probably the best place, and where there are generally good fish lying) which leads from the fresh-water loch of Bronster above; another burn connects this with a large loch called Voxterbræ, and another in turn connects Voxterbræ and Fogryjath. I do not guarantee the spelling of the names of these lochs, but I do guarantee the fact that they are all full of brown trout, and that after a spate there is an excellent chance of killing some fine sea-trout in them as well. On the same road, but further away than the Bridge of Walls, there are several lochs in sight of the road—two large upper ones called Hulmalees and Grass-water, and a smaller one further off the road called Culierin. These are all full of brown trout and some sea-trout. Culierin particularly, towards the end of the season, is

never without a fair supply of sea-trout in it. From Culierin a burn runs down to a curious muddy salt-water loch called the Marly Loch, which is more or less part of the voe. This is a capital place to fish; indeed, I do not remember ever having been to it without getting sea-trout, whether wading and casting over the weeds, which are very troublesome there, or fishing from a boat, which is decidedly the more favourable and satisfactory way. The voe comes up in a curious winding manner from the sea, and the island or water, or everything together connected with this voe, is known as the Vaddals of Æniforth. The last time I fished in Shetland was there. The fishing had been unusually bad for a day or two, an 'sea-trout scarce; but as I was leaving the next day it was obviously incumbent upon me to fish somewhere, though the day looked rather worse than the preceding ones, as there was a very cold wind with a very bright sun. Partly as we started late, and partly as we were not able to get a boat where we expected to, we did not commence fishing till about two o'clock. I fished on till it was nearly dark—about six, I suppose—using one fly, a silver body, red tip, and light wing, and killed exactly a dozen sea-trout. And though I have often got far more in number and heavier fish, I was very well pleased with them, as they were a nice level lot, much about the same size, just running up from the sea, and almost every one of them with the sea-lice fresh in their gills. I raised several good fish that day—one that must have been about four pounds at the least. He stayed off one piece of weed all day, and came after the fly, so that we could see his fins at the top of the water and the swirl that he made as he followed the

fly, which for some reason, though he was not unwilling to follow, he refused to take hold of. I also lost a very good one, as he got into the weeds, being rather too strong for me to stop him at the moment. The long lines of weeds, though the very places where the fish are often lying, are a great nuisance to the angler: floating just under and on the surface of the water, they catch the hooks in a manner provoking enough to try the patience of a saint. For sea-trout generally, and always where there are weeds, I only use one fly. With that you must just hold your fish pretty firmly by the head, keeping him if possible in the deep water off from the weed. If he only gets under it and springs the other side, it is long odds against your coming to much closer quarters with your silvery friend. It is astonishing what a strain even the finest trout-gut will stand, always provided that you do not *jerk* it. It is your nervous, timid, excitable angler who smashes in finny monsters, though of course there are times when such a thing may happen to the very best of men. There is very little doubt but that more fish are lost after they ought to have been upon the bank or in the boat, than most men, who are not regular anglers, imagine. Not that I mean to advocate fishing with coarse tackle; on the contrary, I take very good care to fish as fine as I possibly dare under the circumstances, and fishing fine tells in the long-run.

I have already said that much of the fishing in Shetland, and that too the best, is in the voes where burns flow in at the head, and where the sea-trout collect and wait for a favourable spate to push up into the lochs. As a rule, these voes and the salt-water lochs fish best for a couple of hours before the tide is full, and for a

couple of hours after it turns to run down. This, however, by no means invariably holds, and they occasionally rise well even at dead low water. Round about Walls, and, indeed, throughout Shetland generally, I have heard tales of voes where wonderful fishing was to be had. Northmavine especially is said to be a piscatorial paradise, and though I am not acquainted with the places personally—and few can be, owing to their inaccessibility—I entertain no doubt whatever but that most would repay an angler of sufficient energy to go afield and try them; for wherever a good-sized burn runs into a voe in Shetland, there you may pretty safely reckon upon finding sea-trout. There are many parts of Shetland where the angling is said to be excellent; but there being no accommodation near, it is not of much use to any one. Tents have been often tried, and may doubtless be agreeable in July, and even in the first half of August; but towards the end of that month, and still more so in September, when the days draw in and the nights are chilly, I can scarcely imagine being under a canvas roof, unless one that had been rigged up by professional hands. Two or three seasons ago I went up to Shetland in the steamer with two men who had determined to 'do' Shetland in tents; and, in justice to them, they seemed as likely a sort as any to make a good business of it. They were two Oxford men, who had been under canvas before, and had simply made up their minds to see out a fortnight of it in Shetland in a tent, whatever happened to them. I breakfasted with them one morning, and left them encamped upon the banks of Loch Tingwall, when I was on my way to Walls. The weather was very fine, and they had not as yet suf-

ferred any further inconvenience than that occasioned by a rude and wholly un contemplated invasion of midges, which took place about 4 A.M. I did not see them again, but was afterwards told a tale that had apparently horrified the simple-minded people who passed their uneventful lives in a quiet part of the country. It was to the effect that two young men with a tent arrived there one evening during that season, and finding no other accommodation available, persuaded the woman who kept them to give up the keys of a Methodist chapel; and there, having lighted a blazing fire, they passed a night of wind and storm in at least a more comfortable manner than they could have hoped to have done under the doubtful protection of a small bell-tent. So, should this meet the eye.

On one occasion some enthusiastic campers-out were braving the fury of the gale on the banks of Loch Tingwall, near the manse, when the kind-hearted minister there, vexed in his mind not only for their comfort, but even for their safety, sent down to ask them to pass the night in his manse,—an offer which the bedraggled dwellers in tents were only too happy to humbly and gratefully avail themselves of.

Shetland ought to be a great country for the angler, and would be so if it were not for the poaching that goes on. I regret to have to give a very poor account of my good friends the Shetlanders in that respect. Nets about the mouth of burns are only too common; and though they may not do so much harm in the way of fish captured, they do a great deal of damage in the way of stopping fish entering during a spate. Great slaughter also takes place, I understand, among the spawning sea-trout in the burns in winter-time.

The real truth is that the ordinary Shetlander cannot imagine the possibility of any one fishing with any object save that of selling or using his take; and then, of course, it is catch when you catch can. His mind is not constituted capable of grasping the idea of any person in a state that warrants his being allowed to go at large fishing for the mere sport of the thing. I remember a native once coming up to me when I was sitting on the banks of a loch one fine day smoking and changing my flies. After some preliminary chat he wanted to see what I had got, which consisted of two or three sea-trout. He immediately wanted to know if I sold them, and what I got for them, and only seemed inclined to be convinced that I was really fishing for my amusement on my pointing out to him that I should be, at all events, a long time making a fortune out of it if I came all that way, and devoted tackle, flies, and the whole day, all to catch perhaps only two or three fish. The angler is much the better of being provided with a gun up here, as though there is not much of what may be termed sport proper for it, nevertheless it often comes in very handy in helping to contribute to the commissariat department, no small consideration at times in out-of-the-way places; and it may help to pass most agreeably many a by-day when you feel disposed to take a rest from fishing, or it is too fine for such an amusement. In very few parts of Shetland are there restrictions placed upon any one shooting who thinks it worth his while to do so; and, at all events, there is not the slightest difficulty in finding out on inquiry the few places where these exist, and getting all information about where they do not. There is no game in Shetland, and the at-

tempts made to introduce grouse and partridges have invariably failed; the quality of the heather, the damp climate, the immense quantity of winged vermin, or possibly all combined, prevent their increase. There is some fair rough snipe-shooting scattered about; golden plover, too, in large flocks are very numerous on the hills—indeed, I have seldom seen any place where they are more so. These scarcely afford very great sport at the best of times; and were it not for their value on the table, these little speckled beauties would probably be allowed to plaintively whistle away their little lives undisturbed by powder and shot. Wild-ducks are generally to be seen about the lochs, and curlews, herons, green plovers, sand-pipers, and all sorts of shore and sea birds are to be met with on the coast. Rock-pigeons are very numerous, and come in the autumn to the fields to feed on the corn there, and are then extremely easy to get near and to kill, being very different in that respect from their cousins the wood-pigeons in the south. They are the genuine blue-rock, and live and nest in the high cliffs round about the coast; and if sitting in a boat, you can kill them as they fly out over your head—you can kill most things that possess wings. So, if you particularly happen to fancy yourself as a performer with the breech-loader, just try that particular line of sport some day, and make a careful note of the result. From my diary I take the following entry of a bag brought in by me one afternoon, which is at least noticeable for its variety, if not for either its quantity or quality: one raven, one wild-duck, one curlew, three snipe, two golden plover, two rock-pigeons. The collector would unquestionably find profitable use for his time here, and there must

be numerous rare birds often about which escape the notice of the uneducated naturalist. Over at Foula the skua nests; but they are strictly preserved by the Melby family, to whom the island belongs; indeed, had it not been for their exertions this now rare bird would probably have become entirely extinct in these parts. He is a great favourite with the Shetlanders, as he is supposed to be an inveterate enemy of the raven, a great pest in Shetland, as it attacks both the lambs and the lambing ewes. In April and October large flocks of migratory birds pass over Shetland, including the lordly swan; but they only settle on the lochs for a short time to rest, and then again off on their weary way. Eider-ducks are common in winter, and I have occasionally seen specimens there in summer and autumn, probably ones that had been prevented by some accident from leaving at the usual time. Seals are also to be found. The men employed in fishing declare them to be quite common. But I do not think that they are likely to fall victims to the casual sportsman without more than an average expenditure of time and energy, as they have a very fair notion of taking care of themselves and keeping to the most out-of-the-way rocks.

It is of course needless to ask if you have read the *Pirate*. You have done so, of course; but never mind that: read it again up there, and it will cause you both to understand and appreciate it and to enjoy the beauties of that rough country all the more. The descriptions of the country generally are as true of it to-day as they were when first written, and though of course the manners and customs of the people have changed with the times, they have probably done so here to a far less extent than

in almost any other place in the kingdom. Even to this day superstition still lingers more or less among the commoner and least educated part of the people, and only last year there was a case of assault which arose out of one Shetlander accusing another of having bewitched her cows, not only believing this to be the case, but naturally requiring no further or more proof of it than was to be found in the fact that their milk was not disposed to churn with its usual readiness. To this day is that most graphic of pictures, the spirited description of the whale-hunt, often reënacted on the Shetland shoals, and friends and foes alike combine against their common prize. One Sunday a few seasons ago I remember walking over from Walls to see a gigantic whale, said to be eighty feet long, which had come ashore and been secured in one of the voes. When we got near the place we asked some women where it was. It was perfectly clear that they paid us the compliment of taking us for 'gangers' or some persons coming to look after the interests either of the Crown or the Lord High Admiral *in re* the whale; for despite the tainted air and the bits of the flesh which were being washed up into the crevices of the rocks along the bay, we were assured in the most ingenuous manner that they had heard nothing whatever of any whale having come ashore at all. A most obvious fabrication, for just round the corner of some rocks quite near them lay the carcass of the huge monster, most of the flesh cut off and the blubber and fat put up in casks. We saw them watching us attentively from a little distance as we inspected the enormous remains, and trust that no one ever visited them or their prize more harshly disposed towards their rights in

the matter than we were, and that they succeeded in realising and dividing fairly among them the proceeds of their lucky windfall. Though to-day the bold pirates and smugglers of the more romantic days have disappeared, they are represented by the scarcely less bold and hardy fishermen, all the able-bodied men of the outlying districts being away most of the year at the fishing, at which some of them make a good deal of money, as, indeed, they deserve to do, when one reflects on all the perils and dangers they run in the vessels engaged at the far-off fishing-grounds in northern waters; and no less to-day does Claud Halcro's song come but too true, and but too often the poor Shetland maid may still

'Look over
These wild waves in vain
For the skiff of her lover;
He comes not again.'

I have in these pages endeavoured to map out for the reader a holiday which involves no great expense either of time, trouble, or money; in which he will not only visit a part which, though not very far distant, differs in many respects from most that he is likely to have been accustomed to, but be able, should he feel so inclined, to vary the routine of an ordinary tour by combining it with some little rough sport. A holiday that will bring him home refreshed and invigorated, and, if out of sorts, having got more good out of such an expedition than if he had paid visits in turn to a whole cycle of hydropathics. Let him go up (if with a companion, all the better) with the intention to enjoy himself, and in his sport not to expect too much or to get that without any trouble. Not to be put off by the Giant Despairs he may meet with, or to be led into disappointment by exaggerated hopes induced by the insinu-

ating piscatorial Munchausens he is quite sure to come across up there. I have drawn attention to one particular locality where undoubtedly fair sport can be obtained, and which is admittedly inferior to no other part in its wild natural beauty. Voes, caves, steep cliffs, low beather hills, and lochs are the features of this country. There are few or no trees in Shetland, and these for the most part refuse to grow higher than the wall they are planted against;

no rivers—at least none that any person save a Shetlander would dignify by the name of such. This seems at first to tinge with bleakness the whole character of its scenery; but notwithstanding all this, there is a quaint picturesque beauty about the country which, combined with the kindly simplicity of its people, will cause every one to carry away naught but pleasant recollections of his trip to the bleak isles of storm-swept Ultima Thule.

MY HOLIDAY RESORT.

THERE is a place, unsung, unknown
 Beyond the hills that bound it;
 No foot of wanderer, save my own,
 As yet, it seems, has found it;
 And yet 'tis in an English shire,
 And by an English river,
 Where, through tall elms, an English spire
 Springs, heavenward pointing ever.

Thither, oft as returns the time—
 My hard-earned time of leisure—
 While Jack flies off through every clime
 In breathless chase of Pleasure,
 I duly wend, in certainty
 That, flying her pursuer,
 The wayward fair will come to me,
 Who never seem to woo her.

And so it is. No sooner down
 The postboy there has set me
 (The ancient postboy of The Crown),
 Than, instant, she has met me.
 She meets me in my host's kind face,
 And in his eye, that twinkles;
 In vain she seeks a hiding-place
 Within its happy wrinkles.

She follows me into the house,
And sits with me at dinner ;
She waits on me in our carouse,
And, like a prince, I win her
Without attempt ; for, though it prove
That none may long resist her,
My heart that moment is in love
With Ease, her dreamy sister.

At morning, with the sun, she peeps
Into my latticed chamber,
Where, 'cross the panes, the woodbine creeps,
And roses try to clamber,
To tell me how beneath the sill,
Despising now wild berries,
The blackbird works his wanton will
On strawberries and cherries.

I rise, in turn despising now
Her rivals' charms to stay me
(And here I make a silent vow
Alternate they shall sway me ;
This compromise all strife shall end,
In this my time of leisure ;
The quiet nights with Ease I'll spend,
The days I'll give to Pleasure),—

I rise, and follow where she leads
By garden-paths resplendent
With bordering blooms, that grow, like weeds,
Of culture independent :
The vicarage garden, quaintly set
With flowers in tufts and patches—
Here fragrant rows of mignonette,
Sweet Williams here in batches.

And here tall rows of hollyhocks
Enclose a shadowy alley ;
And here we breathe mid pinks and stocks
And lilies of the valley.
And thence 'neath trellised boughs we pass,
Through which the sunshine dapples
With spots of light the dewy grass,
Thick strewn with fallen apples.

And then a path we wander down
Towards a pleasant water ;
But hush ! the rustle of a gown—
It is the vicar's daughter !
I know it by the footfall light,
Than the glad wavelet lighter ;
I know it by the morning bright,
That moment growing brighter.

She comes to say, ' Her father waits,
That she's with hunger dying ?
(From lip that naught like falsehood hates
Was e'er such pretty lying !)
' She's spread herself the breakfast fare,
Placed pots beneath the cosies ;
But, perhaps, I'd rather breakfast *there*,
On lilies and on roses ?

I gaze upon her as she speaks,
So innocently vicious,
With radiant brow and glowing cheeks,
And *think*—'twould be delicious !
But only *think*—for, by my vow,
I've given this time of leisure
To Ease (and not to Love, you know)
Alternately with Pleasure.

The time may come when I may speak,
And then the world shall know it
(Though for the purpose words were weak),
Or I'm no faithful poet !
Till then I keep it to myself,
My hoarded joy, a treasure
Than any miser's buried pelf
More precious beyond measure.

And so the place I never name,
Though I so dearly love it,
Where it lies hid, unknown to fame,
Lest some my prize should covet.
When I return, I merely say
To Jack, fresh from the Rhine, ' O,
I've had a quiet holiday
Down with some folks that *I* know !'

HOMeward BOUND: 'THE INVALIDS' VOYAGE.'

Of the great mass of people on board her Majesty's Indian troopship *Nerbudda*, numbering in all nearly fifteen hundred souls, two-thirds, perhaps, may be reckoned as invalided from foreign service for one cause and another, and returning home to their native shores to reap the benefit of change of scene and association upon their temporary release from the cares of official life. But although this is the invalids' voyage, as the last trip of the trooping season is termed from the nature of its human freight, the passengers are far from being a white-faced body of hypochondriacs, nor does one find a dismal scene of hospital-like suffering and misery on board the giant vessel, as she sways her deck in unison with the swell of the Maltese tide.

Seen from the little row-boat which has brought us off from the shore, the white sides of this monster seem to tower above like the painted walls of a house; and it is, indeed, a lengthy climb to reach the open port, a sort of hall-door of the giant vessel, by which we gain admission to this vast floating hotel. The scene on deck is one of busy animation, as the ship is upon the point of starting again, after a brief rest, upon her homeward voyage. Conspicuous amongst all figures is that of the hale and hearty captain, whose healthy appearance and cheery manner seem eminently calculated to revive the flagging spirits of invalids, and banish from their minds all recollection of the enervating heat of India in the expectation of England's bracing airs

and the substantial benefits to be derived therefrom, as evidenced and personified in his athletic figure. The warm Mediterranean air and brilliant sub-tropical sun are with us as we steam slowly out of the harbour of Valetta, and everything presents more the appearance of a holiday-party, full of high spirits and enjoyment, than a vast body of invalids fleeing from the health-destroying Indian heats and all the influences which tend to send so many Anglo-Indians home feeble, crotchety, and too painfully conscious of possessing a liver.

With the captain, at the moment, is conversing a dapper major of Lancers, returning to England upon leave of absence, and in command of the troops on board. His face is bronzed, his lengthy moustache is waxed to needle sharpness, and his whole appearance bespeaks him what in truth he is—a soldier to the very marrow, thoroughly wrapped up in his profession.

Upon the quarter-deck knots of idlers are chatting, chaffing in a light-hearted merry strain, revisiting in memory the land they have, in many cases, seen for the last time, and striving to anticipate in imagination the pleasures of the country they are hourly approaching more and more nearly. Of the male section of this merry group, the bulk are enjoying the fragrant odour of the ever agreeable tobacco; for the luxury of smoking is only prohibited during the hours of divine service, at the time of military parades, and at the two extremes of the day—that

is to say, before six o'clock in the morning and after eleven at night.

The face of one young 'sub' beams with delight, as he gives utterance to his joyous thoughts. 'I can't imagine,' he says, 'how it will really feel to be amongst *pucka* streets and houses again. No dirty niggers, no burning sun, no beastly India, in fact. It's seven years since I was in London, and my mind has become so enfeebled during that long absence, that I can hardly grasp the idea that a few more days will really see me there once more.'

'London!' repeats a medical veteran, whose brogue immediately indicates from which side of St. George's Channel he hails; 'it's devilish little of London that I want to see at all. I'll be for running direct from one boat to the other at Portsmouth, and seeing how soon I'll be in Cork.'

'It's a long day before either Cork or London will see aught of me,' says another of the same fraternity. 'I'll just take the first train to Glasgow. But,' he adds sententially, 'we're not at Portsmouth yet.'

There is no occasion for the reminder; for so brilliant a sky, such marvellously clear blue sea, and an atmosphere of such genial warmth were never yet found about our English shores so early in the year as April, the month which now finds us ploughing through the ripples upon the great heaving bosom of the azure Mediterranean. The immense expanse of quarter-deck is liberally strewn with seats, curiously fashioned in wood and cane, reed and twisted iron, designed to accommodate themselves to every conceivable reclining attitude and meet the requirements of every imaginable sedentary posture. Some few are occupied by ladies, who are certainly more pale-faced than the

men, and seem *ennuyé* and hopelessly weary of the monotonous sea-voyage; while several are playthings for the brown little Hindustani chattering children, who, offspring as they are of English parents, are yet totally ignorant of the language of their progenitors, and can scold and squabble only in the vernacular of their swarthy ayahs. They are a peevish and querulous set of infants, apparently very much petted and spoiled, and undeniably given to the questionable amusements of whimpering and crying and abusing their guardians and one another alternately, which they do in the choicest and most highly-flavoured flowers of the Hindu tongue, to the consternation of the ayahs and the unceasing mirth of such as recognise the beauty of their tropes and metaphors.

The lighthouse of St. Elmo is receding in the blue distance; the low-lying island of Gozo is growing rapidly nearer in our forward route; and soon Malta will be only a memory of the past, as hazy in our mental vision as it is rapidly becoming to our ocular perception. We are reminded that it is four o'clock by the resounding clang of the Chinese gong at the saloon entrance, and the aspect of the scene rapidly changes from one of calm repose to that general stampede which succeeds the signal to take advantage of the half-hour allowed in which to dress for dinner. In a few moments the quarter-deck is entirely deserted, the whole animation of the ship appearing to be concentrated in the numerous state-rooms, where toilets are being rapidly performed, and scurrying servants are busy in fulfilling their hirers' varying wants.

Thirty minutes later finds a new centre of attraction for this hive of active drones. The great saloon

—so long that the unaided vision almost fails to discern the objects at its far end, and is even doubtful of those midway between its side-board at one extreme and the stern windows at the other—is crowded with a moving mass of gorgeously-attired officers and tastefully-dressed ladies. Amid so great a medley of varying uniforms there is much that is imposing to the unaccustomed eye; for some forty or fifty regiments are represented in this assemblage, from the plain mess-jacket of the liner to the glittering mass of gold which bedecks the Indian cavalry regiments, while the handsome blue-and-gold of the navy sprinkles its less gorgeous tones here and there amongst the blazing scarlet and pink and purple. Three only of the assembled groups are attired in civilian costume—the chaplain, from the necessities of his craft; a general officer, whose reasons for assuming *mufti* are not apparent; and a young gentleman from the Admiralty, for some official cause mixed in with this naval and military throng. Their sober black coats and spotless white ties are in strange contrast with the many-hued costumes of the other constituent parts of the gathering. When all have found their accustomed places, and the necessary array of servants is stationed at the several chair backs, two sounding raps from the paymaster at the head of the principal table herald the grace that comes from the lips of the chaplain stationed at the other extreme; and then, as the soup is handed round, a general hum of conversation commences, and continues unbroken through the many courses of the dinner; nor does it in any way abate until a decorous silence falls upon the party at the signal from the paymaster, which is concurrent with the appearance of dessert, and

which heralds the daily health, given in brief military style—'Queen.' There is a general imbibition to this loyal sentiment, and then 'tongues wag all' again.

Dining per regulation, as is the custom on board these ships, presents some quaint and curious characteristics; and one is inclined to smile at the unbroken orderliness of the arrangements, from the initial signal for grace to the final removal of the wine from the table, which promptly disappears when the regulation has been observed that 'the bottle shall pass twice before coffee and once after.'

After the discussion of this lengthy meal, the quarter-deck is again the place of rendezvous, when the few short moments of remaining daylight are enjoyed, in company with the never-failing soother and comforter long veneration has christened 'the divine weed.' But meantime a change of garments has taken place; the mess-jackets have disappeared, and undress coats are again the order of the day. Steady as a veritable house, this floating hotel moves over the surface of the great inland sea, the only perceptible motion being a scarce visible quiver imparted to the timbers by the ceaseless turning of the ever-active screw. It is indeed a scene of calm repose, undisturbed by any element hostile to its quiet. And as the sweet perfume of the tobacco floats slowly and languidly upon the soft breeze upward to the myriad stars glittering overhead, one feels certain undefined regrets that the voyage must so soon cease, and that the busy turmoil of our great capital must replace this easy *dolce far niente*.

When half-past eight arrives there is another gathering in the saloon, to partake of that cup which is too often spoken of in connection with its cheering properties, in

opposition to the powers of inebriation possessed by all that long catalogue of drinks which are under the ban of Sir Wilfrid Lawson and his followers. Without these festive interludes a long sea-voyage would become infinitely more tedious than circumstances at present render it; eating and drinking are, in truth, a grand resource on board ship.

To realise the fact that the *Nerbudda* is a veritable floating town, and arrive at a just appreciation of the vast population of this floating hive, one must leave the circumscribed quarter of the officers and penetrate to the troop-decks, where the soldiers are sleeping after the toils of a not very arduous day.

There is apparently unlimited space for the men, yet every available spot seems to be occupied. In the dim light one can discern row after row of hammocks slung from the beams, while upon the vast extent of floorage space there is left only a narrow passage between the different groups of sleeping forms, wrapped each in its blanket, and curled in that variety of curious postures to which the human form can accommodate itself and yet find rest. The wives and children of this body of military are, of course, stowed away in a special space allotted to them.

As the dinner is conducted with military precision, so everything else on board moves with the regularity of clock-work. The regulation says that the lights in the saloon shall be extinguished at eleven o'clock, while those in the state rooms will be allowed to burn a quarter of an hour longer, to admit of sufficient time elapsing in which the inhabitants can prepare themselves for bed. Punctually to time comes the inexorable lamplighter, and a dim semi-obscurity succeeds his visit; for

after his round no illumination, except that coming from the one or two locked lamps in the saloon, is permitted; the state rooms are, of course, in total darkness.

The fear which deters so many from seeking their couches in the close and unwholesome atmosphere of an ordinary passenger steamer's cabin need in no wise be a cause of anxiety to those who travel on board these luxurious transports; for the system of ventilation is so perfect that even in what is known as the 'pandemonium,' two stories lower than the saloon, the air is clear, fresh, and pure as almost the most fastidious taste can desire. So admirable is the atmosphere, indeed, that it is possible to imagine oneself in an ordinary room with the windows open rather than down below on board this gigantic floating hotel.

Very admirable bath-rooms are provided on board the *Nerbudda*, which are in very great demand, the bathers making their appearance for a first dip shortly after seven o'clock. Early rising is, indeed, a necessity, if one would join the general breakfast, which takes place at half-past eight in the saloon.

The novice on board is inclined to wonder whether the hot rolls that make their appearance upon the table were procured in Malta upon the previous day, and kept warm by some ingenious process for arresting the dispersion of the caloric, or whether in this floating town there is absolutely a bakery. Investigation proves the latter to be the case; in addition to which provision for our comfort we discover that the ship maintains also a sufficient supply of live stock—sheep, poultry, &c.—to furnish fresh meat for the voyage; while the arrangements for keeping up a suitable provision of fresh water are admirable in the extreme, the

clear, cool, refreshing liquid not only being distilled, but carefully oxygenated, to remove that flabby softness otherwise inseparable from condensed water *au naturel*.

Breakfast having been duly discussed, a general parade takes place prior to the reading of the morning's prayers by the chaplain to the whole ship's company. This ceremony concluded, it is somewhat amusing to observe in what manner this hive of drones finds occupation for the idle hours. Amongst the ladies reading and a little work form the staple means of killing time; but the men, who can command the former amusement, are ill provided with the latter. As a natural consequence tobacco is largely consumed, while the 'devil's picture-books' are largely in requisition, one party in the saloon appearing to beguile the greater part of the day at the whist-table.

Light and frivolous, however, as are the bulk of the occupations to which we give our minds, there are moments when more serious duties are demanded from us; and as we have perchance jumped 'from grave to gay,' so may we make the descent 'from lively to severe.' The busy hand of death has been amongst us while we have been at play; one of our weaker brethren below having succumbed upon this homeward voyage, almost within sight of his native land, to the ruthless enemy who for long has been pursuing him, and whom the faint spark of life, flickering in his frail body, has been unable to combat with success.

The whole life of the ship seems suddenly to have been suspended; the heretofore ceaseless throb and rattle of the screw has paused; the voice of mirth no longer is audible upon the quarter-deck or within the spacious saloon; the

cards have disappeared, and work and book have been laid aside. A solemn silence reigns around, its stillness not disturbed, but rendered more apparent, by the low booming tone of the ship's bell, slowly tolling forward. Over all the white ensign floats idly, half-mast high, only partially borne out upon the light breeze, which is hardly strong enough to spread the bunting to its full extent.

In the midst of this drear silence the chaplain suddenly appears, robed in flowing white surplice, upon the main deck, and simultaneously come forward two sailors, bearing between them a burden, which sways from side to side with their movements, as they slowly step towards the gangway. The voice of the chaplain, reading the solemn words of the burial service for use at sea, falls grimly upon this group, called suddenly away from its various amusements. Amongst all save the white-robed officiator the same intent silence is maintained; and when the peaceful quiet is disturbed by a heavy splash, as the shapeless canvas-covered mass is slid over the side into the sea beneath, the clerical voice is hardly needed to remind us that a body has been committed to the deep.

A few moments more and all is life again, the gangway portals have been closed, the flag is fluttering at its accustomed height, the labouring screw is once more fulfilling its noisy but indispensable mission, all the idlers have dispersed to their books, or cards, or what not, and we are again speeding forward towards home, away from the last resting-place of that fortunate member of the fraternity, whose task is done, and whose mortal remains are deep under the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

A dull murky sky, and chill ungenial atmosphere, seem hardly

fitting accompaniment to Africa's northern coast, and are in conspicuous contrast with the lovely weather we have been luxuriating in; yet such we have as, at noon, old Gib.'s rocky summit comes slowly into view, looming in the far distance like a darker cloud than the dull gray masses amid which it is almost hidden. Notwithstanding the drizzling rain which is falling, however, we, later on, are gratified with a grand view of the great mass of solid rock from which Gibraltar derives its name, rising sheer from the water's edge and towering high above to the feathery edges of the clouds. The most insensible viewer of Nature's beauties cannot fail to be impressed and charmed with the panorama opened out before us: the quaint-looking cluster of houses nestling quietly in its secure nook at the foot of the mighty rock; the picturesque little Spanish towns scattered along the seashore; the busy craft that flit over the surface of the gray-green water; and, in the inland distance, the high mountains showing here and there patches of spotless snow shimmering on their lofty summits. To the eye which has accustomed itself to the bleak, sun-baked, sterile-looking rocks of Malta, there is something infinitely refreshing in the verdure of the grass and trees around this English stronghold. On the other hand, the grim and broken rocks of the African coast appear far from inviting, however much we may feel inclined to tread the long stretches of undulating country behind them, which lead far away to the gigantic Atlas Mountains, whose hoary heads rise high over all in the dimness of extreme distance.

Once clear of the Straits and out of the Mediterranean, we are

again in brilliant sunshine. Gradually we make our way up the coast of Spain and Portugal, close enough to see distinctly the ever-varying charms of the bold rocky shore, with its bluff cliffs and gloomy headlands, capped with conspicuous lighthouses, white, clean, and dazzlingly brilliant 'in the clear sunbeams. In many places furious great rollers are dashing on the strand, and breaking into frothy foam as they burst over the sharp and dangerous rocks, and curl high up the sides of the steep cliffs. Nor is their sullen roar inaudible to us even at the distance safety bids us keep. The dull rumbling seems almost like an echo of the thundering cannon which have made so many of these headlands memorable in history; and the mind is carried away to the recollection of the grand acts of heroism which have made the names of Trafalgar and St. Vincent prominent in the chronicles of naval warfare.

We enter the Bay of Biscay upon a clear bright morning, with a soft gentle breeze and a sea calm, in truth, as the proverbial mill-pond. Nor does this troublous bay for one moment assert its usual character for boisterous misbehaviour while we are upon its glassy surface. Fortune favouring us, the English Channel is smiling likewise in emulation of its neighbour. Thus we approach Portsmouth under the most favourable auspices; and many an invalid rejoices that he is back again upon the shores of his native land, and breathing once more the soft atmosphere of an English spring, better to him than all the drugs of the Pharmacopœia, coupled with the combined knowledge and skill of the whole Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians.

MY FRIEND CARBONELL.

'Tis from high life high characters are drawn.'—POPE.

Picture to yourselves a man above the middle height, long in the arms, and broad in the shoulders, dressed in a loose gray suit and a soft hat; a man with a free careless way of carrying himself that goes well with a shooting-coat, in the pockets of which his ungloved hands are wont to burrow, and with a frank sun-bronzed face half hidden by his long fair beard and moustaches; a man whose eyes are generally laughing, but can, upon occasion, grow chill with scorn or bright with anger. Picture him as he sits on the box of a drag at Ascot, gazing, with keen look and a smile that mocks his own excitement, at the favourite making its last try, and making it in vain. Or see him at the covert-side on his favourite bay, every nerve of horse and man on the watch for the fox to break; or on a moor stalking the red deer; or lounging in his evening-suit at the door of White's. See him, I do not care where, anyhow or anywhere, and you must confess that he is every inch of him a duke and a gentleman. If there is no halo of nobility about him, there ought to be; for, my readers, I linger over the avowal with a pleasant smacking of the lips, he is John Philip Augustus, Duke of Carbonell, K.G., with as many other titles as a chameleon has shades of colour, and almost as many thousands a year as there are days in that same cycle. He is all this, and more—I have his gracious permission so to style him—he is my friend. My friend! Then who am I, you are asking.

Well, I am not a 'noble author;' I am a simple country doctor, tolerably successful, tolerably—perhaps more than tolerably—well-to-do, certainly more than tolerably happy. And all this I owe, in great measure, to 'my lord duke,' as the speakers at public meetings where he presides term him. The manner in which I came to know the great man, and how he produced this effect upon my fortunes, whether he procured for me a public appointment, or made me his private medical attendant, or endowed me with the three-hundredth part of his income: these things may be amusing, if they are not commonplace. And I trust they are not that; for it is by no means every man who knows a duke.

To explain I must go back a good many years; for we are old friends, quite old friends, Carbonell and I. It was my first day at Christ Church, my first taste of life in the great college, the sombre grandeur of whose gigantic piles, as seen in the gloom of an October evening, filled my freshman's heart with emotions now of pride, now of nervous humility. I stood, at last, my own master, in my own room, on the third story of the great quadrangle, and I quailed before the eye of my scout. A grave stout man he, with a sly look and a husky voice.

'You'll like to have some finger-napkins, sir? Gentlemen generally like to have them, on this staircase, sir. The gentleman who had these rooms before you—he was a nice one, Mr. McArthur was'—and the grave face of the

college servant broke into a smile at the recollection of some freak of the bygone nice one—'he gave me half-a-dozen, and I could let you have them very reasonably. Thank you, sir. And then you will want a coal-scuttle: that and the cloths—glass-cloths, tea-cloths—you will leave to me. A dozen claret glasses—can't do with less here, sir—and half-a-dozen soda tumblers, I can let you have. That's nearly all, I think, sir, except a couple of glass bowls forced cup, which I luckily have by me.'

But the glass bowls were too much even for my timid endurance.

'I hardly think I shall need those—that is, just at present, perhaps.'

Grant's face put on an expression not of anger but of pity. He condescended to explain, not to argue.

'You see, sir, that is how we do things here, sir. In the small colleges and halls, even, perhaps, in our new buildings, it may be different; but in the House, and on this staircase especially, that is how we do it.'

I am a particularly shy man, and I tried to turn it off. 'Is this a rather superior staircase, then, eh, Grant?'

'You are lucky in being put on this staircase, sir,' answered he, solemnly sighing, with an evident presentiment that the luck was ill-bestowed. 'I daresay you noticed now, as you came up, who has the rooms on the first floor, right-hand door?'

'No, I did not.'

'He is Viscount Ashford now,' said Grant, with a quaver of reverence in his tone which I should have fancied no undergraduate could cause; 'but some day, sir, he will be Duke of Carbonell.'

At the sound of the name I glanced round almost awestricken. I ordered the claret-bowls without

a murmur: and so I first heard of 'my friend Carbonell.'

In the letter which I wrote home detailing my early experiences at Oxford, I did not omit, and very naturally too, to mention that Viscount Ashford was on my staircase, though I modestly added, with a due regard to truth, that I had not yet made his acquaintance. Indeed (this I did omit) I hardly expected to do so. But it was to be my lucky hap, nevertheless. His presence on the staircase cost me, in the manner before mentioned, the value computed by the vendor of two cut-glass cups; his friendship was to cost me a severe bump on the head, and no little damage to my goods and chattels. And that in manner following: Two days after my talk with the scout I went to my first wine-party, and returned to my rooms late in the evening. 'Varsity life, as seen through the medium of claret and good-fellowship, appeared in its most roseate colours as I crossed the silent quadrangle, and not even the gloom of the bare wide dimly-lighted staircase, with its white-washed walls and rail black with the dirt of two centuries, was able in any perceptible degree to lower my spirits. The name of my predecessor, 'Mr. W. J. McArthur,' still remained painted over the door; but I made a mental note, as I glanced at it, that not many hours hence it should give place to mine. The inside door was open a few inches, and the firelight flickered cheerfully within. Happy at heart, with the resolute hand of the master, I pushed open the door. Bang! crash! Down upon my luckless and unsuspecting head came (and it was no light weight, I can aver) a wicker clothes-basket. It had been propped upon the door with cruel ingenuity. In the moment of my pride in my undergraduate independence, I had fallen into

the 'booby trap' of one's school-days. But that was not all. I had hardly raised my hand with a cry of rage, to rub the injured place, when astonishment at the state of things in my room stayed it half-way. In the centre, surrounded by bare space, was a kind of funeral pile reaching almost to the ceiling; all the chairs and side-tables were heaped upon the centre table, and were surmounted by my bath, a few lexicons, an expensive desk, my boots and shoes, the scuttle, my lawn-tennis racquet, a dozen of claret, a teapot, blacking-brushes, and all sorts of odds and ends. The pictures had been carefully unhung and placed on the floor, with their faces to the wall, and on the brackets were large lumps of coal. The windows were open at the top, and the blinds and curtains carefully passed through them. The pain caused by the falling basket was nothing beside the mental anguish I felt upon seeing my new possessions—on which I had glanced with so much pride, as I sat in their midst, affecting to read—thus outrageously treated. I understood it too well. We had been discussing the subject of 'haymaking in a fellow's rooms,' and theoretically it had seemed a praiseworthy custom. Not so now when I stood in the shoes of 'the fellow.' No; I gazed round with a rueful face, wondering what was to be done, and had not yet decided, when a door below was suddenly thrown open, and a very noisy company seemed to be issuing forth upon the staircase. Shouts and shrieks of laughter, with the trampling of a dozen feet on the wooden stairs, came every second nearer. My door, which I had flung to in my rage, was still more violently thrown open, and six or seven men rushed in without waiting for an invitation, and

greeted me in a boisterous manner, quite at variance with my ideas of university etiquette.

'Salve *Arthure imperator*!' cried one.

'Play the hermit, would you, Mac?'

'Had you there, old man!'

'How's your poor head?'

'Three times three for Jerry McArthur!'

And so on until—

'By Jove, it ain't McArthur!' cried their leader, stopping short half-way across the room. 'Phengh!' with a loud whistle. After which there was for a space dead silence, I standing miserable amid the ruins of my household gods, and the other party staring with more of amazement on their flushed faces. Then, with one accord, they broke into a long loud peal of laughter, falling about and clutching one another for support in their paroxysms, and breaking out afresh every time that they looked at me. No doubt I was a rueful-looking object. I tried with very partial success to join in the laugh, and when it grew a little less uproarious, I said, with a shamefaced attempt at confidence,

'Well, the least you can do is to help me to put things straight.'

'So we will!' cried the leader.

'I am really very sorry; but we had no idea that McArthur, an old chum of ours, had not come back to these rooms. You see, you've taken his furniture. But come, never mind this mess. Tell Grant to put it straight in the morning; you must come down and have a glass of punch with us. I'm Ashford, two floors down. This is Bowdler, also of this staircase. Nonsense, come along!'

Capital fellow, my friend Carbonell! That was the way I came to know him. While I was at Oxford I lunched or dined with him once or twice a term, though

I was not quite of his set. But enough of that. I have been so long introducing the Duke and myself, that I can only briefly tell of the two occasions on which I found the friendship of my friend the Duke of no little assistance. May the shadow of the strawberry leaves never grow less !

Scene: a small country town, a picturesque little place enough, near the Welsh border. Hither my Fate had led me, but had failed to provide for me a practice, so I had to set about and make one for myself. It was a bigoted little place, which prided itself upon its Conservatism. It disliked and despised all novelties, especially, as it seemed to me, new doctors. Indeed, the old inhabitants of Corveton looked down upon all newcomers, whether they had diplomas or not. So I found it very up-hill work, and that not only in a business, but also in a social, point of view; and oftentimes remembering the old Christ Church days, when I had never heard of Corveton with its midday dinners, its old fogies, its prejudice and gossip, I was inclined to sigh that the glory had departed from Israel. But as no man at Corveton had ever been to the House, its glories had no effect upon the townfolks' sensibilities, who, I must confess, were not only inclined to turn, but did actually turn to me, a very cold shoulder; so that, with the exception of one or two respectable patients who had quarrelled with the other doctors and were obliged to come to me, I had hardly an educated person to speak to. I had been there, I learn from my books, quite six dreary months—so dreary after university and hospital life—when an event took place which annually roused Corveton from its stagnation. This was the Flower-show. It was held in the outer green of the old castle, a most beautiful

spot near the centre of the town; and this particular year the occasion created more than usual excitement, owing to the presence of a large party of visitors at Corveton Park. This was the seat of Lord Corveton, the great man of the neighbourhood, whose smiles and frowns raised or lowered their recipients in Corveton opinion as surely and as regularly as the atmosphere acts upon the thermometer. It was known that greater preparations than on any previous occasions were being made at the park to receive visitors of the highest distinction. As the park omnibuses drove in and out, and servants came down from town, the excitement rose to its height, and half the town spent their time at the windows. The day came, and it was beautifully fine. I went to the green because it was the proper thing, and with very little thought of enjoying myself. I do not think that any one in the tents looked at the flowers, and scarcely at one another's dresses; they were keeping their attention quite unoccupied that it might be concentrated on the park party. I was at the other end of the tent when the great people arrived. Then I learned their presence from a whisper all round me of,

'That is the Duke; there, with Lord Corveton! That is his grace!'

I looked in the direction in which every one was looking, and recognised the cheery unchanged face of the Ashford of Tom Quad. He was advancing slowly up the tent talking to his host, the other visitors following like a little court. By a lucky chance, a few paces short of me, Lord Corveton stopped to speak to some one; the Duke, his attention disengaged, walked on, glanced round, and caught my eye. Maybe I was looking at him a little eagerly, for I had hardly

